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ABSTRACT

This appendix supplements and provides documentation for the report that evaluates the consequences of cooperative extension education. Three reports are provided. An evaluation of the report by the citizens' review panel critiques the objectivity and thoroughness of the evaluation report. It finds that the evaluation would be more accurately described as an in-house report and that the data are insufficient and sometimes misleading, especially regarding adequacy of funding levels. A short history of the cooperative extension system provides a general analysis of how and why extension has functioned as it has over the years. Extension history is divided into seven eras, each representing a significantly different set of environing circumstances from that which preceded it. An attempt is made for each era considered to define the most important elements in the social, economic, and political milieu; to indicate the typical and significant programming and program planning trends; and to note how the cooperative organizational structure responded to and supported certain of the institution's thrusts. A report of visits to several county extension programs provides general observations and discusses variation and flexibility. Specific observations are made about four individual programs and about black land-grant colleges in the South. (YLB)

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Citizen's Review Panel Report on the USDA Extension Evaluation

Historical Overview of Extension

County Visits

Citizens' Review Panel Report
on the USDA Extension Evaluation

January 15, 1980

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As part of the evaluation of the Cooperative Extension Service undertaken jointly by the Department of Agriculture and the State Cooperative Extension Services in response to the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977, USC 3301, a Citizens' Review Panel was convened. It was the Panel's duty to determine the objectivity and thoroughness of the evaluation. The report follows.#

INTRODUCTION

Our task was straightforward: we were charged with critiquing the evaluation of Extension. Although our individual views on Extension vary widely, the members of the Citizens' Review Panel were able to reach a consensus on the National Extension Evaluation Team's report.

We want to clearly state at the outset that our opinions of the evaluation and our opinions of the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) as an institution are quite separate and distinct. It must be stressed that it is because of our concern for the future vitality of Extension services, coupled with our misgivings that a flawed evaluation might lead to an inaccurate perception of Extension, that we offer this review.

The purpose of convening a review panel was to solicit the opinions of a representative group of citizens about the evaluation. The members of the panel were chosen by the National Extension Evaluation Design Team. The goal of the Design Team was to assemble a diverse group of citizens on the basis of geography, age, sex, race, area of special interest, and familiarity with Extension.

Our meetings occurred between March 1979 and January 1980. At our first two meetings we organized the approach we would take to accomplish our task and during the intervening months familiarized ourselves with the volumes of background material produced by the evaluators. Because of time constraints, we could not wait until the final version of the evaluation became available and instead worked with successive drafts of the report. The National Extension Evaluation Team kept us informed of changes in the evaluation as they were being made.

PANEL'S COMMENTS

The scope and conclusions of the evaluation fall short of our expectations. However, we endorse the intent of the mandate and the opportunity it provides to gather and assess information that can prove valuable in determining the future direction of Extension programs.

#*This report is unedited.*

The evaluation provides a kaleidoscopic description of the Cooperative Extension Service; the relationship between the Federal, State, and local partners in providing Extension education; and the major thrusts of all four program areas. In some instances the report pulls together descriptive data from a variety of sources, and thereby becomes an important source document in itself.

CONTENT

Perhaps our most pointed criticism is that throughout the report there is a marked lack of analytical thinking. For example, in the chapter on Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) the following statement is made:

> Since Extension is by design responsive to clientele demands and relies on voluntary participation, those farmers least inclined to seek assistance have not been served as well as those who have been motivated and able to ask for and utilize the program.

Inherent in this statement are many assumptions the evaluators leave unquestioned. Who is the "motivated" farmer? What is the profile of those who do not seek assistance? Why is the responsibility to become involved in Extension placed on the user and not the provider of the services? Doesn't the failure of Extension to reach those unable to ask for and use the program imply a criticism of the program itself? And finally, what are the economic and social consequences of this failure?

These are but a few of the questions not dealt with in the evaluation. We are well aware of the difficulties inherent in assessing such a variable as motivation. However, we contend that it is still valuable to ask the tough questions even if the problems posed cannot be addressed using proved methodological techniques and statistical data. Our suggestion is simple: at the outset, state the severe limits faced in providing a definitive answer to Congress about the consequences of Extension, but don't use these limitations to avoid a probing analysis.

The epilogue, Issues Highlighted by the Evaluation, is an example of keen analytical thinking and raises some crucial issues. It moves beyond the descriptive and probes some important policy questions facing the Cooperative Extension Service. Because of the contrast with the rest of the evaluation, we are led to ask, Why wasn't this approach used throughout the report?

In addition to poor analysis, there is no attempt to take a longitudinal perspective to assess how programs and policies have changed over time. For example, table Numbers 1 and 2 in the agriculture chapter would be far more informative if statistics were provided for several years, not just 1978.

The report readily acknowledges the diversity of programming in Extension, in large part due to the grassroots policy determination, yet no attempt is made to compare programs in different regions of the country or describe the variety of programs conducted by the Cooperative Extension Service.

The authors use aggregate findings and draw conclusions from pooled data. This approach makes it difficult to reach meaningful conclusions. What works well in one State may not work well in another State. However, because you have aggregated data, there is no way to determine what the variables are that make a program work well. Qualitative data are potentially more valuable than statistical summaries that obscure essential differences among the States.

When an example of a project is used, such as the small farm program in Texas, there is no way to know whether it is representative of other Extension programs. The assumption, because of the way the material is presented, is that it is typical of Extension's small farm programming work when indeed it may not be.

We are sympathetic to the problems faced by the Design Team: a lack of methodological techniques to carry out its mandate coupled with not enough time and money to perform the research that the evaluators could have used. For example, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is one of the most thoroughly examined Extension programs, yet scant use is made of the data accumulated. These data could have been used to augment the analysis in the Home Economics and Nutrition chapter.

Our panel also discerns a poor balance between the positive and negative aspects of Extension. The chapter on agriculture is generally positive in its findings. This upbeat assessment is nowhere tempered with an examination of the negative consequences of technology. Conversely, the chapter on Home Economics and Nutrition misses many opportunities to point out the positive aspects of Extension Services in this area.

Throughout the evaluation there are many critical areas not covered. There is no evaluation of the qualification of the people who work in Extension. How effective are Extension agents as agents of change? Do they receive any formal training for this role? What are their biases? What accountability mechanisms are there? There is no attempt to evaluate the quality of the information dispensed and its use to different groups of consumers. Does Extension create independent decisionmakers and leaders or does it foster dependence? There is little mentioned about urban food production.

The evaluators do not adequately address the participation of minorities in Extension programs. Which minorities are served? Is there minority participation on advisory groups? This information must be provided and broken down by region, program, and institution. It may be that most of the outreach to minorities is being done by the 1890 institutions rather than by all Extension programs equally. Similarly, statistical averages about minority participation cannot show the possibly uneven level of involvement in different parts of the country.

There should be an evaluation of behavioral changes that result from Extension programs. It is not enough to provide statistics on the number of people served, the number of contacts made, or the cost per contact. For example, information is given on the cost per contact of the one-to-one approach as opposed to television, and the conclusion is drawn that the use of mass media is most cost effective because it reaches so many more clientele for each dollar invested.

No attempt is made to determine the relative effectiveness of different educational approaches. Certainly television may reach more people but if it doesn't result in the desired outcome its value is severely undermined. The report often makes the point that many people use Extension, therefore the services it provides must have merit. Use alone is not a sufficient criterion for justifying tax money to support a program.

The evaluators fail to question certain assumptions that govern Extension programs. In a summary statement about the consequences of EFNEP, one criterion for success is the percentage of homemakers who provided a specified number of servings of food from each of the four food groups: milk, meat, vegetable or fruits, and breads and cereal. This categorization of food reflects a bias as well as outmoded theory. It does not take into account the dietary goals of the Senate Nutrition Committee nor what nutritionists now know about combining incomplete proteins to achieve an adequate diet. Further, the evaluators do not assess the availability or affordability of the foods from the four groups to the EFNEP participants.

POLICY ISSUES

The first step of any future evaluation must be to determine precisely what Extension policies are and where they are determined. The report repeatedly asserts that policy is set at the grassroots level, yet legislation and funding mechanisms (which also exist at the State and Federal level) often exert a powerful influence on policy decisions. In the program chapters there is no examination of how and where decisions are made. This is pivotal to any attempt to describe the Cooperative Extension Service.

Another factor that requires further study because of its profound impact on Extension activity involves the broadening of the clientele base. The evaluation states that the traditional clientele "fears" this trend since it would result in a reduction of services to them. In turn, the CES is reluctant to reduce such services because it "fears" that such a move would result in a loss of support from the traditional clientele.

Many key policy issues are not addressed. There is no attempt, for example, to assess the interrelatedness of Extension's components. What are the dynamics among the four program areas? What happens if those in the agriculture program champion the use of pesticides to increase the farmers' crop yield while those in home economics are concerned about the harmful effects of such chemicals?

During the past several years there has been a growing awareness in our country over environmental and food quality concerns. Conversely, the USDA, land-grant universities, and the Cooperative Extension Service have all been major proponents of an industralized form of agricultural production that promotes the use of hormones and antibiotics in livestock feed, chemical fertilizers, and herbicides, to name a few. The evaluation does not assess Extension's receptivity to examining alternative methods of production.

There is also no attempt to assess power politics among the four program areas. It would be easy to document from which program areas those in high positions in Extension come. Do agricultural interests completely overshadow nutrition concerns because there is a preponderance of those with a bias toward the ANR area in key jobs? Such information could provide insight into the decisionmaking process and ultimately program consequences.

The evaluation does look at each program's relationships with other public agencies. In the ANR section the conclusion is drawn that "Extension *appears* [italics added] to complement or supplement rather than compete with these sources."* With the constraints on budgets, it would seem important to do a more detailed assessment of duplication with the private sector. We suggest that any future evaluation quantify the services Extension renders to the private sector and determine which of these services should be continued or eliminated with funding reallocated to program areas with few or no alternatives in the private sector.

INFORMATION

The Panel questions the accuracy of some of the material presented because of inadequate documentation. Some data are quoted, yet a description of the studies which generated them is not provided. A far more liberal use of footnoting would help.

Generalizations are made but not substantiated. The following quote from the epilogue, Issues Highlighted by the Evaluation, illustrates this point:

> Studies of rates of return from public investments in agricultural research fairly consistently report substantial net gains to the economy ranging from 30 percent to 60 percent. *More recent efforts to calculate rates of return to Extension itself have shown similar results.* [italics added]

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*Epilogue, page 176

This in an intriguing statement about the economic consequences of Extension yet nowhere in the report is it supported by data or a reference. To what studies is the evaluation referring? How were these percentages derived? If it is possible to arrive at this type of conclusion, why doesn't the bulk of the report deal with such quantifiable economic impacts?

We are puzzled by this lack of documentation. Before the report was completed, we received background papers and support material from which the evaluation report was written. There is a great deal more substance, both in terms of statistical material and analysis, in these reports than in the final draft of the evaluation. Enough information must be included in the final report so that the evaluation can stand alone.

In a previous draft of the evaluation, we were impressed with an analysis of the several ways that the role of Extension education and the manner in which it might determine its clientele and specific program objectives may be viewed. Because it exemplifies the type of analysis that was done in the course of this evaluation effort but not included in the final report to Congress, it is presented in very abbreviated form as follows:

(1) The Cooperative Extension Service might be viewed primarily as an institution to disseminate any or all new or needed information, knowledge, and technology to the general public.

(2) The Cooperative Extension Service could have the responsibility of serving specific clientele groups and meeting their specific educational needs.

(3) The Cooperative Extension Service could become an independent public agency supported with funds from other Federal, State, and local government agencies for specific or general purposes agreed upon through memoranda of understanding, cooperative agreements, or contracts.

(4) The Cooperative Extension Service could become a strictly State agency supported basically with State and local government funds and policy direction.

FORM AND LANGUAGE

In several instances statistical material is incomplete or difficult to interpret. The chart on page 109 of the chapter on 4-H is a case in point. This table presents data on the percentage of potential youth who participate in 4-H activities broken down by type of residence. The 1.6 million youth who were enrolled in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and 4-H instructional TV program series are not included in the table. The full outreach effort of 4-H into low income, urban communities is not fairly characterized because of this omission in the table, even though this clientele is acknowledged in the text.

The report has problems with language, particularly in the program area chapters. This is a significant handicap to interpreting data. There is a heavy reliance on such vague terms as "many," "some," "others," "they," "it appears." Often "they" and "others" are not defined and without the data necessary to support qualifiers such as "many" and "other," statements that rely on such words lack substantive meaning.

The audience for the report is Congress and the public, yet the frequent use of jargon and acronyms sharply decreases its readability and utility for those outside of the Extension community. A glossary might have helped solve this problem.

The report does not adequately define its terms. A clear sense of what is meant by the "social" and "economic" consequences in each program area is not evident. Likewise, there is a blurring of the distinction between paraprofessionals and volunteers.

The language in the evaluation betrays an underlying racial bias. Phrases such as "white hat" and "black hat," used to connote good and bad, cannot be considered value-free expressions within the social context of our country.

Finally, the report is too wordy. Enough said about that!

DESIGN

The members of the Design Team decided at the outset to approach their material by creating four separate and concurrent assessments of each of the main program areas. Since Extension is so broad in its subject area as well as its reach, some sort of division of labor was certainly necessary. However, it was essential, once this initial state of the evaluation was completed, to synthesize the material into a coherent whole. The evaluation falls short in this regard.

It is very difficult to find specific answers to the issue-based questions posed in the beginning of the report. In some cases the information exists but is difficult to extract from the bloated text. An overabundance of descriptive material obscures and overwhelms any conclusions that deal with consequences.

The report does not relate data and policy issues. The summary of the economic and social consequences of Extension programs provides a concise overview of the data presented at length in the program areas. However, this material is not presented along with the policy issues which are discussed separately in the section, Issue Highlighted by the Evaluation. There is one exception: the summary of consequences for ANR ends with a conclusion about future policy directions. This is a valuable integration of consequence data and policy issues which should have been done throughout the report.

Because data are not used to support the conclusions and interpretations in the chapter, Summary of Economic and Social Consequences of Extension Programs, the report merely becomes subjective and descriptive rather than evaluative. There is no way to track the stated goals of Extension through the data to arrive at the consequences and ultimately assess whether these results are compatible with policy objectives.

The evaluation instruments are inadequately described. What were the special studies carried out for the evaluation? What was the sample size for any given study? What are its limitations? (For example, a Gallup Poll was commissioned as part of this evaluation effort and we question its utility. Although it can identify clients and their familiarity with Extension, it cannot measure economic and social consequences.) There was no attempt to validate data by looking at the same variables using different methodologies.

The evaluation does not look at future plans and goals. Although it gives some examples of the ways Extension has responded to demands placed upon it by world events or national priorities in the past, there is no attempt to provide any perspective on Extension's reaction to a changing social reality. Outreach efforts to minorities and the broadening of the clientele base to include urban populations are but two areas in which educated guidance and informed speculation would be appropriate for a report of this type.

It seems obvious that Extension needs to be evaluated within the context of its goals. Therefore, the evaluation should be designed to state the goals of each program area simply and then proceed to measure to what extent a given objective is achieved. Although each program section does start out with a statement of goals, there is often no connection between these goals and the rest of the chapter. For example, one of the stated goals for the home economics and nutrition chapter is to improve family health and safety practices. Although this is listed at the outset of the chapter, it is never mentioned again.

Finally, the design doesn't build in any controls for objectivity and quality. Was there any attempt to check and verify research findings? Who are the evaluators? What are their biases? Do they have any vested interests that would prejudice their findings? There are several instances in which the evaluators betray such biases, as exemplified in the following sentence: "lower income and less educated clientele benefit less from mass media approaches so other methods must be used to serve these groups."* This may or may not be true but nowhere in the report are there any data to support this statement yet this assumption, if acted upon, would have significant impact on Extension programing.

Another assumption, this one concerning the relative productivity of small versus large farms, could also have a significant effect on programs and policies. The report states that "the greatest impact on aggregate agricultural productivity can be obtained by targeting Extension programs to the larger producers who account for the bulk of farm production."* Such assumptions must be recognized as a bias and objectivity tested. It may be that with the proper advice and technological assistance small farmers could produce more food in aggregate than a nation of large farmers.

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*Epilogue, page 175

CONCLUSION

We are concerned that this evaluation will lead to some unfortunate consequences of its own. First, we do not feel the document presented to Congress can be viewed as an evaluation; rather, it can more accurately be considered an in-house report. Because this report has design flaws and fails to examine so many key issues, we fear that future evaluations are likely to repeat the same errors.

Due to insufficient and sometimes misleading data, Congress could draw the wrong conclusion about the usefulness of Extension programs. The report does not provide information necessary for Congress to determine the appropriateness of Extension's involvement in its variety of programs. Likewise, it does not offer sufficient data for Congress to judge the adequacy of the funding levels to the four program areas within Extension. Finally, this report, if left unchallenged and uncorrected, could lead to inappropriate policy and program setting in the future on both the State and local level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cooperative Extension Service is a unique arrangement of shared responsibilities for policy development and funding. It enjoys a great deal of popular support and as such has the ability to mobilize an impressive amount of volunteer assistance. Further, other government agencies are looking at Extension as a model for their own outreach efforts. Because of these reasons, it is important to perform a valid and scientifically sound evaluation of Extension.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that program evaluation be continued on an ongoing basis but with several key changes. First, earmarked funds must be appropriated for such an undertaking. These funds must be in addition to the allocations made to the four program areas. Further, funds must be sufficient to support a good evaluation effort.

Second, a methodology must be developed so that valid evaluations can be conducted in the future. During our analysis of the evaluation, we formulated a set of guidelines for future studies that were arrived at separately by an independent contractor. Because of their importance to the success of subsequent evaluations, we list these guidelines here.* They are as follows:

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*Chapter VII, page 153

1. Clearly state study purpose.

2. Specify study limitations and/or degree of generalizability.

3. Describe the Extension program being assessed.

4. Relate study questions and measures to program objectives.

5. Discuss the reliability and validity of the measures selected.

6. Establish a clear link between client outcomes and Extension program delivery.

7. Provide adequate labeling of tables, charts, and graphs.

8. Separate presentation of findings from conclusions.

9. Provide adequate support for conclusions and a comparison if program success or failure is concluded.

10. Balance completeness of report with succinctness of presentation.

Finally, there is a need for a system of checks and balances to ensure the objectivity of an evaluation. People working within Extension would bear the primary responsibility for gathering impact information on a regular basis. It is important that the staff involved in this task be told what they are doing, why it is important, and how their efforts contribute to an overall assessment of Extension. A professional, independent group should then be involved in reaching the evaluation judgments based on these data.

The report proposes a two-tier system of studies to be used in future evaluations. Tier 1 studies would be conducted primarily to meet the informational needs of State and local decisionmakers and would not necessarily use standardized indicators of Extension program impacts. However, States would be encouraged to share methodology for studying impacts of programs with high priority for national evaluation. Such sharing would encourage the use of comparable study methodologies in different States to facilitate concerns and synthesis of impact findings on similar programs.

Tier 2 studies would be conducted on the national level to answer questions about the national impacts of identified Extension program goals. Although this two-tier system may be the best approach for future evaluations, it would be helpful if the report had included information on other evaluation techniques with a brief discussion of the merits and drawbacks of each.

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*Kappa Systems, Inc., "Guidelines for Improving Extension Program Impact Studies," Arlington, VA., Volume III, 1979a.

We recognize that this evaluation is a first attempt at assessing a program that has a long history of service, is broad-based in its scope, and diverse in its approaches. As such, it is a commendable effort, if not an entirely successful one. Our comments should not be construed as a criticism of Extension; indeed, we feel the evaluation does not effectively portray Extension.

As we examine the evaluation and its assessment of the Cooperative Extension Service, we must bear in mind that the Agriculture and Natural Resource program area has been a prime factor in developing increased agricultural productivity in this country. This makes the American consumer the beneficiary of abundant farm commodities; plays an important role in supplying the world's food needs; and helps to maintain the balance of trade through agricultural exports. If these three major contributions constituted the total CES effort, which is far from the case, it alone would merit the support of Congress.

In conclusion, we acknowledge that the majority of our comments about the evaluation are negative. However, we hope it is clear that they are offered within the context of our concern for the vitality of the Cooperative Extension Service.

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APPENDIX

The members of the panel represent a broad spectrum of American citizenry. Thirteen men and 10 women volunteered their time. Nearly half the members are from ethnic minorities. The ages of participants range from 21 to 62. Panel members come from every region of the country; some reside in rural areas, others in large urban centers. The occupations of panel members are as varied as their backgrounds. Among the participants are farmers, homemakers, State legislators, a hospital administrator, a restauranteur, a school teacher, a nutritionist, and community organizers. Some panel members had never been involved with Extension previously, while others have a long record of volunteer service. Finally, both supporters as well as critics of Extension are represented on the panel.

MEMBERS

Citizens' Review Panel

Lupe Anguiano
San Antonio, Texas

Joseph Ballou
New Haven, Connecticut

Robert Bucher
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

William Burrow
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Traverse City, Michigan

John Zippert
Epes, Alabama

Historical Overview of Extension

John W. Jenkins

January 15, 1980

INTRODUCTION[#]

The Cooperative Extension Service is a unique, complex, and fascinating American educational institution. It is also ubiquitous while few people know its extent or scope of activity. Extension employees can be found in the Federal government, every State land-grant college or university and some others, and almost all counties of the country. Congress provides money to support Extension, as do State legislatures, county governments, private foundations, businesses, and individuals. Extension works with family farmers who want to produce and market efficiently and profitably, farm wives who need to learn how to furnish the home nicely or to keep the books, vertically-integrated corporations that want to grow tomatoes appropriate for mechanical harvesting, rural and urban youths with all kinds of interests and needs, city residents who must prune the lemon tree in the side yard, low-income people who lack understanding of human nutritional requirements, people interested in community improvements, and many more. It does better with some of these than others, and it does better in some places than others. No single individual or agency controls Extension, because it is organized legally and in fact on the basis of internal cooperation and voluntary client participation, rather than upon authority, which is the typical functioning principle of most contemporary governmental units--that is, line agencies.

Structurally, Extension embodies the democratic faith and corresponding educational premise that individuals can and should learn to guide their own and their country's destinies. When all is said and done, after all, it is the student or client, and no one else, who takes or leaves what a voluntary educational agency has to offer, thereby rendering effective judgment on its programs. Centralized control is impossible over the long haul. This is the basic conditioning factor of all of Extension's activity. Yet because it is such a far-flung and diverse institution, people who are removed in different degrees from the day-to-day operation of programs (legislators and bureaucrats, for example) sometimes forget that Extension is an educational agency and mistakenly view themselves as authority figures whose function is to issue orders. These people have many crucial jobs to do in Extension, including pushing and prodding, but the mandating of program content and results contradicts the principles of free thought and choice fundamental to education in a free society.

Programmatically, Extension appears to have provided its clients with the services they wanted. Had it not pleased them, they would have refused to participate and the programs would have collapsed. This is to say that if programs diverge too far from that which the mainstream of clients--at a given time, with a given composition--believe to be in their interest, those programs will fail, regardless of their merits as understood by judges, legislators, presidents, bureaucrats, professors, or anyone else. Thus the character of Extension's programs, indeed, the programs of any voluntary educational institution, must be conditioned largely by its clients' wishes. In Extension's case, because its mainstream of clients has traditionally been middle-class rural residents, its programs have tended to serve middle-class rural interests and values.

Critics of Extension note, with good cause, that the United States is composed of more than the middle class: there are the poor and the disadvantaged, as well, who also deserve educational assistance. Moreover, the charge is heard

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[#] *This report is unedited.*

that Extension's programs for the middle class actually conflict with the interests of non-middle-class citizens as they lead to and support a commercial agriculture characterized by high investment costs, large-scale production, and fewer and fewer employment opportunities. Let us assume the worst for the moment, and acknowledge without reservation the merits of this charge. What can and should be done about it?

Congress and the President could formally establish a national policy in response to the charge and then administer it through Extension--as if it were a line agency. By this mechanism, for instance, the size of farms could be limited to 200 acres or the sale and use of mechanical harvesters could be banned. The public good would be defined clearly in terms of law, grounded on principles, processes, and authority established by the Constitution. Extension would be judged good to the degree that it administered (enforced) the national policy effectively. But, Extension is an educational, not an administrative, organization. In what terms should it be judged?

To answer both this question and the critics' charge, it is necessary to clarify the type of educational function that Extension performs. In a word, it extends. As is illustrated throughout the body of this paper, Extension is an organizational device that (1) makes available university-based research results to the non-campus public, and (2) allows people to express their educational needs to university-based scholars, toward the end of influencing future research. In this light, it is easy to see that Extension should be evaluated primarily in terms of the degree to which it facilitates the various forms of citizen-scholar interchange--including providing access to all previously-conducted and concluded research. And this allows an answer to the critics' charge: Extension should intentionally oppose no interest in particular because the responsibility to do so lies only with the scholar, who produces the new knowledge and who is responsible for the moral implications as well as the technical competence of his or her own research. Additionally, it must be stressed that Extension personnel do indeed have the important and appropriate responsibility to provide every opportunity and encouragement to people in all segments of the population to participate in and influence programming. Only the researcher has the right and the duty, when he or she sees fit, to refuse to develop new knowledge. Barring that eventuality, or the even less likely general resolution of social and economic disagreement and conflict, Extension must, to the degree it is capable, serve all comers.

The discussion to follow is a general analysis of how and why Extension functioned as it has over the years. More specifically, the attempt is made for each era considered to define the most important elements in the social, economic, and political milieu, to indicate the typical and significant programming and program planning trends, and to notice how the cooperative organizational structure responded to and supported certain of the institution's thrusts. At the same time, no attempt is made to include all, or even most, pertinent names, dates, and places--to tell comprehensively what happened. Two problems endemic to this project are responsible for this.

The first is the problem of data. A massive literature on Extension exists, but few of its authors concerned themselves with the issues important for this paper. Most of the literature consists of somewhat biased and uncritical in-house documents. Even in the case of master's and Ph.D. papers, which one might expect to be the most impartial, their rigour, methodology, and objectivity can too easily be questioned. Most are based on responses to questionnaires and surveys distributed by the authors, usually in exactly the areas of Extension employment from which the degree candidates were on leave. Other in-house literature includes: State and Federal reports, speeches, and the like, usually prepared to attract clients or to impress legislators or presidents; policy papers, which at best can only tell what some people agreed should be done and why; and various project reports and official circulars, whose value obviously is severely limited. This literature simply cannot serve as the basis for confident and comprehensive assertions about what happened. On the other hand, it is helpful in the process of developing insights about Extension's structure, and that is primarily how it is used here.

The second problem is the lack of time. Given the weakness of the literature as it stands, a minimum of perhaps two years of new research would be necessary to gather needed information. Even assuming that very helpful material already exists, the three-month research period for this assignment really precluded its serious and thoughtful consideration. Thus in terms either of data or time, to answer even semi-definitively "what happened?" is foolish to attempt. Again, however, as with the problem of data, there has been time to develop a fairly coherent structural analysis. And is not a structural analysis almost to be preferred for something like the Extension Evaluation Project? After all, the main problem for policymakers is much more "what to do?" than "what happened?" And this requires some historical perspective on Extension's nature and capacities, which relate largely to structure. Therefore, the historical overview constantly emphasizes Extension's demonstrated ability at various times to act or respond to a given circumstance, and leaves at the level of speculation the degree and quality of that response. It is the only fair and honest thing to do.

The overview divides Extension history into seven eras, each representing a significantly different set of environing circumstances from that which preceded it. This approach allows an analysis of Extension's general ability over time to address issues of national importance, which may or may not have been of immediate interest or concern to all or even some of the people at the local level. The general conclusion is that Extension has in each period responded positively, albeit sometimes slowly and unenthusiastically, to the call of the "larger good." Sometimes the beliefs, values, and interests of Extension's local constituencies have helped, sometimes hindered; sometimes shifting factors internal to the Extension organization have been crucial. In most cases, interactions within each and between them seem to have accounted for important developments. Furthermore, because of Extension's cooperative organizational structure, a diversity of responses to any single pressure or issue has been typical. Each designated state land-grant university maintains its own largely autonomous Extension organization that employs agents who work with individuals, communities, counties, and regions, all of which have their own peculiar characters and concerns. Thus to talk of any particular Extension response in terms of replicated programs is usually inappropriate. Instead, the goal is to discuss institutional or structural capacities and to speculate about their typical meanings.

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ERA ONE, 1862-1914

In 1862 Congress passed the Morrill Land-Grant Act, which provided for the sale of public lands to support a college in each State that must, among other things, "teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts . . . " By 1914 Congress had funded agricultural experiment stations at the land-grant institutions (the Hatch Act of 1887), provided land-grant status for several all-black colleges (the Second Morrill Act of 1890), and finally established the permanent legislative base to support a nationwide, cooperative Extension service by which the land-grant schools and their experiment stations could provide "instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics and subjects relating thereto to persons not attending or resident in said colleges . . . " (the Smith-Lever Act of 1914). The years from 1862 to 1914 formed the first era of Extension history.[1]

This legislative experience occurred during an unparalleled time of social change in America. Robert Wiebe introduces his comprehensive historical study, The Search for Order, 1877-1920, by stating that "America during the nineteenth century was a society of island communities. . . . My purpose is to describe the breakdown of this society and the emergence of a new system." That new urban-industrial-business system remains to this day. Most important to note here, however, is Wiebe's cogent argument that America's basic institutions, agriculture among them, had achieved their basic modern forms by about 1920. This has significance here in at least two connections. First, the commonly-impersonal, big business-oriented nature of agriculture must be recognized as referring really to the whole of America's modernizing development, not to an aberration within an otherwise constitutionally uncorrupted (that is, unindustrialized) society. In terms of tactics for change, critics may have failed to recall an old truism: diseases are cured by treating their causes, not their symptoms. Second, Extension was shaped and advocated by people whose ideas and interests supported the shift to an ever more interrelated urban-industrial-business society. Thus we find throughout Extension's history the basic and rational emphasis on assuring the food and fiber supply and on keeping profitable and efficient the institution which makes it possible. Its concern, that is, has usually been with the development and maintenance of the system of commercial agriculture. Viewing events in this light, it should not be suprising to learn that Extension frequently has slighted the less productive, profit-making, and influential members of the agricultural and rural community; the surprise should be that these people have received as much assistance as they have.[2]

Changes leading toward an urban-oriented form of business-industrial (that is, commercial) agriculture emerged out of an interplay among at least two social reform movements and the early outreach efforts of the land-grant colleges, all of which were to some degree expressions of the modernizing trend. Earliest upon the scene was a widespread, though largely unorchestrated expression of agrarian discontent, probably occasioned by modernization-related dislocations. Ironically, this resulted in a growing willingness among farmers to question traditional agricultural practices and values, to become more politically and intellectually active, and increasingly to believe in the efficacy of formalized education--all of which supported the trend toward modernization.[3]

After about 1890 the movement known as Progressivism--mostly an urban pro-business, pro-government regulation phenomonon--developed. As exemplified in Walter Lippmann's, Drift and Masters, for example, Progressivism represented a faith shared by many intellectuals and social reformers that the scientific method was the proper way to think about the increasingly evident and troublesome problems and possibilities of urban and industrial affairs. Unlike earlier movements that interpreted industrialization as an evil to be fought, or at least avoided, Progressivism welcomed business-controlled industrial life, when conducted and regulated on sound (although never clearly stated) scientific principles. Whether farmers associated themselves with individual Progressives is unclear, but many of them did accept the latter's point of view: by 1900, according to Roy V. Scott, a significant number of farmers had come to think of themselves as businessmen whose job it was to use the latest knowledge and technology to produce food and fiber as massively, efficiently, and profitably as possible. They expanded acreage under tillage, they mechanized (introducing grain binders, gang plows, and horse-drawn drills and planters), and, in a limited way, they turned for technical assistance to the land-grant agricultural colleges and experiment stations.[4]

This demand coincided with a growing uneasiness among college men because their research results were not reaching enough farmers. By 1900 most of them acknowledged the importance of outreach of Extension activity, although few of their institutions had done much about it. Probably the earliest college Extension work occurred in the form of farmers' institutes, sometimes conducted in cooperation, sometimes in competition, with State agricultural departments. The institute movement grew in popularity for a time until weaknesses become easily apparent: content was too vague and general; mostly the old and young attended, not those who really could put to use what the colleges had to teach; meetings were too infrequent; and the oral teaching method was ineffective and unpopular with country folks who insisted on seeing what they were to learn, not being told about it. It was a rather innocuous movement, as Scott indicates by quoting one farmer's response in 1900 to the question whether or not he had enjoyed a recent institute: "Oh, I don't know. It hain't hurt me none." The colleges did broaden their outreach work to include the sponsoring of instruction at rural schools, fairs, short courses, and the techniques. This drawback would perhaps only have slowed the colleges' serious commitment to Extension work had it not been for the introduction, after 1905, of Federally-sponsored Extension projects, which soon threatened to monopolize the available clientele by using the highly effective, practical, and increasingly popular demonstration method of instruction.[5]

This United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) activity began in 1906 when the Bureau of Plant Industry sent Seaman A. Knapp to Texas to help farmers combat the Mexican boll weevil. Before long Knapp's demonstration method, which involved the farmers directly in conducting projects, proved to be effective and quickly spread throughout the South. A bit later, William J. Spillman, also of the USDA, introduced agriculturally more sophisticated but pedagogically similar projects throughout the North and West. In the process, county-based "demonstration agents" came upon the scene to assist farmers with their projects. The agricultural college people did not ignore this (and similar examples set by interested businesses--primarily railroads) and in 1908 K. L. Butterfield reported to a meeting of the American Association of Agricultural Colleges and

Experiment Stations (AAACES) that the colleges's Extension efforts should be expanded greatly, most appropriately with partial Federal funding.[6]

Simultaneously, support was developing in other quarters for the idea of a nation-wide Extension effort to be financed by Federal, State and local sources, and administered by the land-grant schools. Both the Progressive and Democratic parties advocated this after 1910, while an influential business organization called the National Soil Fertility League pushed toward the same end, with the added proviso that Knapp's demonstration method be required. These events and more were reflected in Congress, where advocates began the legislative dialogue as early as 1909. Meanwhile, the colleges slowly but surely slackened their opposition to the demonstration method, sometimes to the extent of actually using it. Finally, in 1913, Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston proposed a compromise between USDA people, who strongly advocated the demonstration method, and the land-grant schools, whose people feared Federal incursions into their domain of academic freedom. The compromise specified that Federal dollars would be made available to the colleges, upon the condition that the Secretary of Agriculture may disapprove of proposed programs. His veto power would thus assure continued use of the demonstration method while at the same time leaving the land-grant schools free to develop their own programs. They accepted the compromise, and in 1914 the Smith-Lever Act passed easily through Congress and President Wilson signed it into law on May 8.[7]

The Smith-Lever Act represented the national confirmation of the modernization trend as it related to agriculture. That the issue was debated on the assumption that social modernization was the basic desideratum is indicated in a letter, dated February 2, 1914, from A. C. True, Director of the Office of Experiment Stations, USDA, to United States Senator Simmons. The note is intended to justify the position True and the AAACES had taken that funds should be distributed "according to people rather than land." True argued for this decision on the following grounds, which indicate a commonly-held point of view regarding the direction agriculture should take:

> By increasing as much as possible the efficiency of people engaged in agriculture it was believed that agricultural production would be promoted in the highest degree. If the farmers became more intelligent and progressive and were informed regarding the best methods of agriculture, they would be in a position to utilize the land in the best way. This would lead on the one hand to an Extension of cultivated area as far as this was practicable, and on the other hand to a greatly increased production per acre and per man.

Thus it was that terms like "efficient" and "progressive" helped to define a rather narrow conceptual framework wherein the difficult problem of determining the meaning of "the best way" for agriculture was not even a question; it meant "increased production per acre and per man" through use of "the best methods;" it meant commercial agriculture.[8]

As becomes clear in succeeding sections of this paper, ideas about "the best way" have changed over the years, sometimes referring to quantity, sometimes to efficiency, sometimes to other considerations. But these changes have usually occasioned little difficulty because until about 1960, most of them have remained firmly within the modernization context, which quickly came to define the Extension clientele mainstream. Nevertheless, such shifts in thinking do indicate a crucial inconsistency at the very heart of Extension. On the one hand, the Smith-Lever Act established a university-based outreach institution. Fundamental to any such educational organization (at least in a democracy) is the notion that ideas, perspectives, and practices will change as researchers, teachers, and students go freely about their work. On the other hand, the interests who advocated the Act and the Congress which passed it clearly intended for Extension singlemindedly to help build and sustain the urban-industrial-business society by passing along to farmers the most advanced and efficient methods of commercial production. Thus from the very beginning the potential has existed for Extension to function appropriately as an educational institution dispensing the fruits of freely-determined and conducted research, while at the same time contradicting the singleminded intentions which led to its being founded. Ultimately, the problem seems to be that the early supporters failed to grasp adequately the nature and potential of the educational institution they were creating.

ERA TWO, 1914-1920

The era lasting from 1914 through about 1920 was a time of growth for Extension both in public awareness and acceptance and in organizational structure. For once, agriculture was generally prosperous--in the early years with good weather, crops, and markets, and in the later years with a popular war to win. Extension shared in the prosperity.

On the whole, Extension programming throughout the era remained faithful to the founders' intentions. Harry Cosgriff reports, for instance, that agents in the State of Washington spent most of their time teaching agricultural and homemaking skills and performing a range of services, including "purchasing supplies and livestock or pruning and culling for farmers." Upon America's entry into the war, Extension redoubled its efforts to increase food and fiber production, with most program planning occurring at the State and Federal levels. In Massachusetts the slogan was, "Food will win the war;" in Iowa and other States acreage of wheat and other crops was expanded; and in Nebraska county agents taught farmers how to vaccinate hogs against cholera. At the same time an expanded corps of home demonstration agents (made possible by emergency Federal funds of over $7 million) taught rural and urban women how to set up community gardens and to preserve food by several methods. Kansas agents urged homemakers to "can to can the Kaiser."[9]

Extension agents also spent considerable non-educational time on the war effort. They organized all sorts of groups to help alleviate the farm labor shortage, calling them the "Boys' Working Reserve," "Shock Troops," and "Twilight Crews." Agents also helped with liberty loan programs, served on draft boards, sold war saving stamps, advertised Red Cross drives, located horses and mules, organized community sings, and held meetings to explain war issues and enlist support. Extension benefited in all of this as it developed a greater commonality of aims and programs, and increased contacts with the public, resulting in enhanced prestige.[10]

Two types of structural developments occurred during the era which supported programming. The first articulated the system and was largely complete by 1917 when the United Stated entered the World War. The articulation process began in late 1914 as the Secretary of Agriculture signed separate but similar memorandums of understanding with all but two of the land-grant college presidents. These agreements clarified relations between the Federal government and the individual State Extension Services. The presidents agreed: "to organize and maintain a definite and distinct administrative division for the management and conduct of Extension work;" to have said division administer all Extension funds for use within its State; and to cooperate with the USDA in all of its Extension activity. The Secretary agreed: to establish a States relations committee, in anticipation of a congressionally-authorized States Relations Service, which "shall have charge of the department's (USDA) business connected with the administration of all funds provided to the States under the Smith-Lever Act;" and to assist the States to conduct "all demonstration and other forms of Extension work." The Secretary and presidents mutually agreed: that all Federally-funded programs "shall be planned under the joint supervision of" the State Director of Extension and a USDA representative; that "all agents . . . shall be joint representatives" of the State Extension Service and the USDA; that "the plans for the use of the Smith-Lever fund . . . shall be made by the (State) Extension division . . . but shall be subject to the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture;" and that the service headquarters in each State would be located at a designated university. In general, these agreements provided for the establishment of a diverse, cooperative system of largely autonomous university-based State Extension Services under the limited purview of a relatively weak Federal agency.[11]

Articulation among the State Services continued, as the old and not-too-important Committee on Extension Organization and Policy within the AAACES was renamed, in 1915, the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) and charged with the big responsibility of overseeing the establishment of appropriate State-Federal Extension relationships. As the years passed, ECOP became the primary agency to express and defend the State Extension divisions' interests. Its earliest important effort in this regard occurred in July, 1916 when it called a meeting with the leadership of the States Relations Service (SRS) to discuss problems that had developed while putting the memorandums of understanding into effect. As reported in the ECOP minutes for 1916, a "free and frank discussion" ensued, followed by agreements resolving several points of disagreement, further bolstering the State units' autonomy: first, all SRS communications to the States would be mediated by the State Directors or persons delegated by them; second, the State units would be obliged only to assist the USDA with its educational work, thus excluding the regulatory function and acknowledging that Extension was not a line agency; third, SRS and ECOP should inform the Secretary of Agriculture of duties or assignments outside their "power or jurisdiction;" and fourth, SRS would have no power to appoint subject matter specialists to operate within the individual States. These agreements, really safeguards for the State services, seem to have been welcomed on all sides. And when the United States declared war in 1917, the State services enthusiastically responded to SRS appeals for Extension effort to increase production and generally to support the war effort, mostly because public sentiment overwhelmingly favored such activity and also because participation was voluntary.[12]

For Extension fully to perform its war activity, many new county Extension offices needed to be opened, and quickly. This logistical problem led to the second important structural development: the emergence of sponsoring agencies called farm bureaus. Isolated county bureaus had existed as early as 1911 and 1912 in New York and Missouri, but they did not become common until war-related urgencies made them irresistible as a means quickly to organize local agricultural leaders for fast and effective action. By 1918, according to Gladys Baker, 29 of the 33 northern and western State legislatures (where most farm bureau activity would take place) had recognized the farm bureau as the appropriate county organizational model. In many places, like Iowa County, Iowa, county farm bureaus and Extension offices began operating almost simultaneously.[13]

At first the farm bureau seemed a perfect sponsoring model, although by late 1920 the potential for problems had developed. As already noted, production had to be increased quickly. This meant that county agents simply lacked the luxury of cultivating individual relationships with farmers as a means of recruiting them as supporters of Extension. Instead, rural leaders had to be organized to influence the mass of local farmers and others. A new organization was necessary because the Grange, Farmers' Union, and others each represented competing interests within the agricultural community, while the county farm bureaus could stand for non-partisan educational activity. Unfortunately, many farm bureaus soon developed into the dominant special interest groups in their areas. Two reasons may account for this. First, because in the early years before county tax support the bureaus sponsored the county offices primarily out of dues payments, their members seem to have commanded disproportionate time and effort of the agents, thus benefiting disproportionately from the modernizing or commercializing (and therefore profit-making) trend supported by Extension research and teaching. Second, by virtue of the pressing need to increase production, Extension advocates identified "rural leaders" in terms of their affluence, productivity, and general commitment to modernization. This led to the domination of county bureaus by people who shared the business-industrial or commercial perspective with regard to agriculture. Other people were not kept out, but they had little apparent reason to want it. Meanwhile, the potential economic and political benefits of organization did not long escape farm bureau members, especially as they met together at the land-grant schools on Extension business. By 1919 they had formed 22 State organizations. The next year they followed out the logic of combination by forming--with the encouragement of C. B. Smith, head of SRS--the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF). In the process of forming these State and national organizations, the educational orientation of farm bureau activity slipped away.[14]

As 1920 closed, the Cooperative Extension Service had developed into a viable national organization. Its national-State administrative structure had been articulated to support a voluntary educational institution, which by its nature required significant flexibility at the local (in this case, county) level for appropriate and appealing programming. Unfortunately, exigencies of war demanded that county offices be opened as quickly as possible with the rather narrow aim of drastically increasing production of food and fiber. This single-minded concentration upon a limited goal allowed the formation of the AFBF, which, by virtue of its logical commitment to the modernization or commercialization of agriculture, could now exercise centralized control of much county Extension activity, thereby rendering illusory the ability of county offices to identify and respond to the breadth of educational needs in any particular area.

ERA THREE, 1921-1929

Although folklore calls it the "Roaring '20's," in the countryside this decade was characterized more by post-war agricultural depression and the "farm problem." Whether roaring or depressing, moreover, the 1920's was a time of general American turning inward and away: internationally, the Congress refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles in March, 1920 because of the covenant it contained which would have committed U. S. support to the League of Nations; popular writers like Fitzgerald and Hemingway represented the contemporary human condition from an overly-subjective, rootless, and ultimately hopeless point of view; in retrospect the "War to End All Wars" became America's most hated war; and the American farmer, now frequently debt-ridden due to too much borrowing for expansion during the war and largely abandoned and forgotten by a public and a government that wished to avoid entanglements and commitments, found himself out there alone, forced to make do--every man for himself.[15]

Extension programming reflected this isolationist milieu. While during the war most work was directed from the Federal and State levels, now agricultural and home demonstration agents responded primarily to calls for assistance from individual farmers and farm wives whose main problem was to adjust to the peacetime economy. In the fields, the agricultural agent helped husband shift to more efficient practices, while the home demonstration agent taught wife to economize by the use of the pressure cooker and other devices. As the decade emphasized the organizing of farmers into commodity groups, better to operate in a very competitive market. Also during the decade, some progress was made in training club leaders to act as surrogate agents, although, at least in South Dakota, the emphasis remained on the hard-core problems of agricultural production, economics, and marketing.[16]

Not enough is known about program planning in this era to support a detailed and confident analysis of it. Here, perhaps, it is best tentatively to accept George M. Beal's thoughts on the matter; his discussion seems quite consistent with what is known about program content. Beal tells us that up to about 1924 program planning consisted mostly of individual agent-farm family meetings where folks discussed agricultural practices, income sources, and limiting factors and then worked out better ways to operate. Agents did meet with groups of farmers, too, but the individualist approach to planning continued, this time as participants developed long lists of generally unrelated duties for Extension employees to perform. Such community meetings were conducted in some parts of Massachusetts, for instance, but agents finally gave them up after becoming bogged down in particulars. Limited progress occurred later in the decade as some county advisory councils were set up to do long-term planning. And increasingly, probably due to agricultural economics work then just beginning to catch on at the land-grant colleges, information about national, State and local conditions led to more "fact-determined programs."

Whether "fact-determined" or not, however, the primary focus of programming remained on the individual farmer. As William R. Page, retired county agent from North Dakota, put it, "The need for help in almost any phase of farming and rural homemaking was simply attended where the wheel squeeked the loudest."[17]

Little direct information has come to light about whose wheels squeeked and got oiled, but it seems likely that Extension mostly served farmers who favored modern or commercial agriculture. On the one hand, there was the AFBF concern and effort to influence commerce and legislation, which clearly indicated its organized allegiance. And locally, Grangers and Farmers' Union members complained that affluent county farm bureau members had monopolized agents' time. On the other hand, the Grangers' charges notwithstanding, Extension does seem to have worked with non-farm bureau people, at least to the extent that they were aggressive enough to ask for help and shared the commitment to commercial agriculture. This is indicated by a testimonial letter written by John Jack of Missouri. Jack has begun farming in the nineteen-teens, using old fashioned methods and making little money. Finally in 1925 he sought the assistance of Dent County agent F. R. Cammack. By 1930, Jones had paid his debts, built and run a profitable farm, electrified his house, and found time to serve on the county highway commission and school board--all of this as "the result of five years of scientific methods of modern farming, a contrast to the eight years of profitless toil by old methods." Thus whether or not Extension was used unequally by farm bureau members, it was the class of assertive commercially-oriented farmers who wished to be "modern" and "scientific" that received its services.[18]

Meanwhile, the Extension organizational structure operated to support programming and, to a limited degree, to address the problem of improper farm bureau influence. Regarding program support at the Federal level, the USDA, in 1921, consolidated all Extension work into four new divisions, appointing leaders in agriculture, home demonstration, and club work to each. Later, in 1923, the Department abolished SRS to make way for the new Federal Extension Service (FES), which was expected to be more effective in spreading improved production and teaching practices. By the mid-1920's, according to J. Neil Raudabaugh, the USDA had developed good working relationships with the State services by virtue of its improved administrative structure, which supported apparently useful regional conferences and training meetings that made available to all States the most current Federal thinking about Extension programming. For example, in 1925, FES Director C. W. Warburton spoke to a conference of northeastern Extension leaders on "Aims and Ideals in Extension Work." This speech is an early example of what became typical: the broadening of the Extension function to address, ever more inclusively, evolving conditions of modern life. Warburton argued that Extension must continue primarily to help the farmer produce and market efficiently and profitably, but it must also help the housewife to run the home "artistically, morally, and religiously," and the community to support good citizenship, develop leaders, and generally to raise up better boys and girls. ECOP, too, was active during the 1920's. In 1923, for instance, it encouraged the FES to prepare and distribute a handbook of facts for the use of county agricultural and home demonstration agents, and it encouraged the State services to have agricultural and home demonstration agents work together on combined farm and home projects.[19]

Regarding the farm bureau problem, ECOP took the lead in addressing it in 1920, by inviting the leadership of SRS and AFBS to meet in Indianapolis to discuss Extension-farm bureau relationships. According to the ECOP minutes, the participants agreed that Extension should avoid performing organizational work for the farm bureau and confine itself to educational work. This led, in 1921, to the signing of a memo by A. C. True, of the USDA, and J. R. Howard, President of AFBF, which acknowledged: that Extension personnel were public employees whose work therefore should "benefit all of the farming people of the country whether members of farm bureaus or not;" that agents were obliged to further the purposes of Extension as set forth in the Smith-Lever Act; and that Extension workers should not directly help to conduct farm bureau business. The next year, in August, Secretary of Agriculture Wallace issued regulations modeled on the True-Howard memo, and the State Extension Service directors gave their "universal approval." Yet with all of this accomplished, it appears that little change in practice took place.[20]

This failure to change may be explained as we switch our focus to the local level, where, by virtue of the legalized sponsoring arrangement in many counties, Extension agents depended significantly upon the support and encouragement of farm bureau members, who most likely did not approve of the new rules. What was the agent to do? The regulations contained no means by which to develop alternative sponsoring organizations, and if the present one were merely circumvented, Extension work could not continue. Thus the agent apparently did the only reasonable thing--he ignored the regulations to the degree that he or his constituency opposed them. Similarly, the now unconstitutional doctrine of "separate but equal" in race relations--a doctrine presently acknowledged by most people as wrong, but seen almost universally by whites at the time as right and just--set the parameters for Extension work with blacks. Thus as the 1920's came to a close, Extension programming at the county level was primarily responding to the concerns and interests of those individuals (sometimes organized into farm bureaus) who had become its mainstream constituency, most of whom were relatively affluent commercial farmers and community leaders. During the 1920's, then, Extension did what it was asked to do by respectable local people. Given the context of the times, could it realistically have been expected to do otherwise?[21]

ERA FOUR, 1930-1941

The Great Depression came as a powerful, sometimes devastating, blow to many Americans. Farmers, who for years had worked to produce efficiently and profitably, now found their markets dried up, as soon would be much of their land--although not enough of it to offset large production surpluses. After President Hoover's maddening hands-off approach to the economic crisis, the new Roosevelt administration instituted several New Deal measures, designed to alleviate the general suffering and place the country on a solid economic footing. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA, 1933) was one such program, which its authors intended to address commercial farmers' (many of whom were farm bureau members) most pressing economic problems by paying them subsidies in return for their restricting of production. Although critics spoke out from both the right and the left, many southern tenant farmers saw their subsidies go to the land-owning planters, and many small farmers were forced off of the land and into the cities, most citizens seem to have supported the administration's efforts with great hope if not enthusiasm.[22]

As in previous eras, Extension responded to the desires of its local middle-class mainstream constituency. And as early as 1930 in Massachusetts, for instance, most county agents were already working full time to relieve depression-related problems. With the beginning of the AAA in 1933, Extension workers throughout the nation dropped most of their other duties and began four-to-six year service careers, wherein program content and resource allocation were determined largely on the basis of Federal government directives. Two examples indicate that State directors took various views of this non-educational work while supporting it to differing degrees. In 1933, Director John R. Hutcheson wrote to all of Virginia's agricultural and home demonstration agents as follows:

> The whole Extension service is on trial at this time and we are going to be called on during the next few months to do many things that are not in our regular Extension program. I am going to ask that you do these things to the best of your ability and hold on to your program as closely as possible. I feel confident that if we do an outstanding job in this emergency that our appropriations will be continued.

At about the same time that Hutcheson circulated his letter, Missouri county agent L. F. Wainscott requested advice of his superior in Extension. He learned more than he had expected, as this passage indicates:

> I often had need for contacting my superviosr . . . about matters of policy and procedure. Many of my questions he referred to the State leaders of the programs. . . . frequently, the directions I got back were rather indefinite and had to be taken with a grain of salt. I soon began to see that it was not always a matter of being in accord with the directives that came out of Washington, D.C. . . . Dean Frederick Mumford made it very clear that he would be the Director, and that he would have the last say in everything.
>
> . . . It appeared that most of the Federal Programs, which they were legally bound to help carry out, were, in their judgement, slightly pink, if not actually red. Suffice it to say that it was easy to see that "States Rights" policies were adjudged by these men to be best. They wanted no interference in their private domains.

Meanwhile, the Federal programs grew apace.[23]

The most concerted Federal activity occurred between 1933 and 1936, after which time Extension agents increasingly resumed their educational work. During the early years agents held meetings, first to explain and later to organize

AAA programs. In this effort, agent Wainscott, quoted above, conducted gatherings on 32 consecutive evenings. Later, many agents served as secretaries of their AAA citizen advisory committees, which were mandated from Washington, and which, particularly in the Midwest, were frequently dominated by relatively affluent, many times farm bureau-member, agricultural leaders. By the end of 1934, over 4,200 AAA advisory committees were in operation, and Extension agents and specialists had trained over seventy thousand people to serve on them. While AAA work did receive the emphasis in the early years, other activities went on, too: local offices were used as clearinghouses for the plethora of Federal programs, dispensing information on the Soil Conservation Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Farm Security Administration, the Farm Credit Administration, and others; and home demonstration and club or youth agents set up programs and performed services aimed at helping people "make do." From the point of view of future developments, however, Extension's work with the AAA advisory committees was of the greatest significance. Although the immediate benefits of the committees' activity almost surely accrued mostly to farm commercial agriculturalists, the general emergency of the citizen advisory committee must also be seen as a potential alternative to farm bureau control. By the late 1930's, at least in Nebraska, farm bureau dominance had already begun to give way to broader citizen direction. As with the case of emergency home demonstration agents during World War One, the economic crisis provided leeway in programming, which probably would have been unacceptable in less disrupted times.[24]

During the Great Depression, then, the Extension institutional structure accommodated itself both to national program direction and to the new trend toward local citizen advisory committee activity. In the former case, State services allowed their networks of county agents (the only such networks of their kind) to perform the service (as opposed to the educational) function because that clearly was what the public wanted and the situation was desperate. In the latter case, continuing criticism of farm bureau sponsorship combined with generally increased citizen participation in public affairs efforts allowed local agents to use their organizational skills developed in AAA work for planning activity more appropriate to Extension.

ERA FIVE, 1941-1946

But then came World War Two, and an immediate shift in the national consciousness from economic depression (then significantly on the wane, however) to all-out war commitment. Maximum production of food and fiber to feed and clothe the armed forces and assist the allies conditioned all else. Problems of local food supplies, transportation of goods, conservation, and so on became of utmost national concern.[25]

Extension programming, as in World War One, responded immediately and wholeheartedly to the crisis. Increased agricultural production, of course, received Extension's major emphasis, but county agricultural agents also worked on local war boards and the like, making draft deferment and other hard decisions. The few community development projects then under way were shelved, while agents organized the rural and urban citizenry to attend all kinds of support problems. As before, the public mind was further conditioned to accept as appropriate Extension activity outside the relatively narrow confines of agricultural production and home economics.[26]

Planning during the war seems to have fragmented locally to allow quick responses to a diversity of demands made at the national level. This probably allowed an increased number of people to become involved in activities where they encountered and were impressed by Extension. Furthermore, because of the mobilization and other war-related problems, Extension trained large numbers of citizen leaders who were made responsible for organizing their local communities and keeping them informed of the fluid situation. Finally, at least to some degree, citizen advisory and planning committees continued functioning, lending support wherever possible.[27]

The organizational structure supported the war effort most prominently by making available its network of local agents, which was already in touch with many of the crucial elements of the agricultural population. Also, with regard to local leader training, university-based specialists quickly took the lead in this effort. Their experience here, no doubt, helped them, their colleagues, and the public both to accept as appropriate and to prepare effectively community leaders for other purposes, once the peace had been achieved.[28]

ERA SIX, 1947-1960

A Conservative political and social mood, massive demographic shifts, and almost revoluntionary technological development characterized much of American life from the post-war period through the 1950's. This resulted in a middle-class American ideology whereby citizens, including farmers, were expected to cherish and protect the American Way of Life from numerous, frequently hidden enemies. Thus in 1951, Secretary of Agriculture Benson stated that "ever-increasing agricultural efficiency" was necessary to serve as the basis for the United States' economic and military strength. At the same time, public school people, who also committed themselves to protect the country's strength, set "life adjustment" as their goal for children, while Extension followed along with its diversity of non-school programs. In a typical statement of the era, FES Director Ferguson struck up the adjustment theme during his 1958 appearance before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations:

> One of the most difficult problems farmers are facing today are the adjustments in agriculture. There was never a time when Extension workers have been so pressed to help farm families make these adjustments. Farmers are trying to keep abreast of the tremendous expansion in agricultural technology, mechanization and the rapidly changing economic and rural social scene.[29]

While traditional specialized Extension programs to assist commercial farmers in production, financing, and marketing remained dominant, new programs emerged to address a whole range of factors that seemed to affect agriculture. During the 1950's, for instance, farm and home management programs spread rapidly. Their guiding idea was to recognize and consider the home as an important determinant of farm production and efficiency, not merely as a place to eat, sleep, and play. One of the earliest farm and home development programs began in Nodaway County, Missouri, in 1943. Known as the Balanced Farming Project, it continued under Extension's auspices until 1955, when the participants formed the Nodaway County Farm Management Association, which sponsored meetings on water management, farmstead arrangement, remodeling, income tax, and so on. Two years later, in Iowa County, Iowa, Extension began a farm and home management program with eleven couples, and by 1960, 34 families were involved. According to one observer, significant "management growth" resulted. Probably the Iowa County experience was typical in the nation. In 1954, Secretary of Agriculture Benson captured the essence of the farm and home management approach when he stated,

> Our most important Extension work . . . is centered on the farmer and the homemaker. We have found that it is the most efficient and produces the best results when the farm-unit approach is used--when there is an attempt to help individual farm families with their interlocking problems.[30]

Increased recognition of these "interlocking problems" led to other program changes, most of which, it must be stressed, were consistent with the concerns and interests of Extension's mainstream clientele. In 1958 Director Ferguson expressed the thinking of many Extension workers as he commented on the possibilities for youth-related programming:

> Agriculture today is broader than farming alone. There are many opportunities for . . . young people in distribution, processing, transportation, merchandizing, and utilization of farm products. We believe that our 4-H programs need to be broadened to meet some of those needs.

Indeed, that broadening process was already under way, at least in Nebraska where, as retired Extension worker Elton Lux put it, 4-H clubs helped boys and girls to "get their contact with other boys and girls, and with the adults that are in business and the running the affairs in the State and nation." Florence Atwood, a Nebraska Extension employee from 1918 to 1957, stated that programming for women had also broadened:

> Well, at first, we thought of Home Extension work as being only with farm families especially with emphasis on food production. . . . Before I retired our programs began to orient around the consumer, quality living has also expressed interest. And family relations, etc.

By the end of the 1950s, similar home economics programs had become permanently available in some urban areas, apparently in response to demands for service by rural immigrants to the city and others who had learned of Extension during the war. Thus, whether in the city or the country, the scope of programming was unprecedentedly wide, yet operating consistently and comfortably within the context of Extension's traditional middle-class commitment to the untarnished virtues of an increasingly complex, yet constitutionally set, American Way of

Life. To put it another way, Extension tried to further the common weal by helping individuals adjust to a changing but fundamentally good society.[31]

By the mid-1950's, certain chinks in this good society's armor were becoming painfully evident. The noted educational Statesman, James B. Conant, published his Slums and Suburbs, proclaiming to his middle-class audience a truth they, like he, had somehow escaped: America was rife with miserable poverty. Meanwhile, the civil rights movement issued in a burden of guilt for many middle-class college students and a fear for their parents. All was not well, and people began to see that society, as well as individuals, requires some changing. A new activist, ameliorative social action mood was emerging, which, during the 1960's and early 1970's, would result in massive Federal government intervention into State and local affairs to address social and economic injustices. As might be expected, some stirrings in this direction occurred in the late 1950's, and Extension was involved.

Extension's first important post war efforts toward organized educational social action work came in its experimental, FES-financed and State service-directed rural development programs, begun on a pilot county basis during the 1955-1956 fiscal year. By 1960, programs were planned or operated in 262 low income rural counties throughout the nation. In his 1957 appearance before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations, Director Ferguson indicated Extension's interventionist/self-help approach to rural development:

> We look at this program as one which is dedicated to stimulating local people to take into account their own situations and their own resources. Where there is a need for a rural development program, it is Extension's responsibility to provide them with a limited amount of special assistance and to help them in getting organized for local action.

* * *

> . . . . It is an effort which has been expressly and specifically directed to getting all of the services of the Department, plus resources of a local nature, brought to bear on the total complex of problems in these counties where a substantial portion of the people are in the low income status.

Secretary of Agriculture Benson, in his 1959 report to the President characterized the scope of rural development programs: "Industrial and other enterprise development, educational and vocational training, better sanitation and health, as well as more efficient farming and marketing, are all included." Benson concluded his remarks by defining the educational function of Extension in rural development: "In its role as educational leader, Extension assists people in identifying resources that will help solve problems, arranges situations which bring the problems and resources together, and furnishes administrative services to county and State committees." Clearly Extension had begun, by 1960, to experiment seriously, although to an unknown degree, in advocating and stimulating social action work.[32]

Extension's broadened and new programs led to a growing emphasis throughout the system on leadership training, which was educationally significant as both a means and an end. As a means, programs were made possible that, given the limited number of Extension employees, could not have been mounted otherwise. According to the 1954 report of the Secretary of Agriculture, during the preceeding twelve months local leaders had conducted meetings attended by over eighteen million people. In Kentucky alone, the number of lay leaders working on Extension programs rose from 18,324 in 1939 to 50,923 in 1958. During the late 1940's and 1950's in Texas, for example, home demonstration staff members trained women leaders to teach classes in tailoring, home management, homestead improvement, furniture reupholstering, and food and nutrition. As an end, leadership training helped provide people with skills, knowledge, and experience that might be used in all sorts of educational and political settings. Although the extent of such use is unknown, the importance of citizens' possessing and exercising leadership abilities in a truly-functioning democracy is obvious.[33]

In terms of program planning during the era, genuine progress was made in providing for broader participation in the process. By 1954, Secretary of Agriculture Benson was able to report that, "The basic program planning was largely done by county councils or committees of farm and other people concerned. Many of the councils guided the agents on overall problems of the county, and many worked on special agricultural, home, and youth problems. Extension agents attended nearly 100,000 meetings with such councils during the year." Reasons for this development have never been investigated systematically, although at least three important factors may be noted here. Perhaps of as much significance as anything was the county farm bureau's removal as Extension sponsor, accomplished generally by 1955. According to William J. Block, separation occurred as the outcome of a complex process whereby many Extension and university people at the Federal and State levels came to see the relationship more as a liability than an asset, while many farm bureau people found that their organization had developed alternative connections which made sponsorship of Extension superfluous. Also, as already noted above, a trend toward citizen planning activity had been established during the late 1930's; it continued throughout this era. Finally, the broader scope of programming meant that new audiences were being served that obviously were entitled to be consulted. All of these led to the increased use of citizen planning committees.[34]

From at least one perspective, however, higher levels of citizen planning activity did not necessarily translate into genuinely broader or improved programming. This was (and is) the case, according to this view, because middle-class people retained major influence as the dominant form of control changed: earlier, relatively affluent farm bureau members ran Extension; later, a larger number of affluent agriculturalists (many of whom were farm bureau members) and community leaders did the planning. In neither case were the less affluent and the followers encouraged to lend a hand. In Wyoming during 1960, for instance, a questionnaire survey of all citizen advisory council members (287 of 376 responding) indicated that Extension agents had recruited them primarily on the basis of "leadership and interest in community affairs." And their programming preferences were clear: they wanted Extension mostly to assist local agricultural organizations and to de-emphasize work with State and Federal agencies and with local non-agricultural groups. Results of a study conducted in Kentucky at the same time were similar. Ohio arranged its advisory committees more clearly along interest group lines by having organizations to be represented name their own delegates. In general, then, advisory group members were fairly affluent and articulate middle-class people who usually had some connection with agriculture, interpreted broadly, or were well-established community leaders. Their efforts tended directly to benefit middle-class or mainstream interests. In the meantime, as in the past, small farmers and other low-income and generally inarticulate people infrequently sought membership on the committees, and therefore few programs were established to attend to their peculiar problems and concerns. Planning within Extension followed the wishes of the more aggressive middle-class leadership, which held control largely uncontested.[35]

As in past eras, the cooperative structure served Extension well, representing it to the outside world while helping it to adjust temperately to shifting economic, social, and political conditions. In 1959, Secretary of Agriculture Benson reported to the President on the scope of FES work as follows: "The Federal Extension Service leads and coordinates educational work of the Department and provides national leadership in developing and carrying out Extension educational programs in the States and counties." Similar statements were also made to the House Subcommittee on Appropriations, a group of men, which, if displeased, could have caused serious financial problems for Extension. In 1958, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Ervil L. Peterson, offered a typical description of how the USDA and FES functioned within the overall Extension organization:

> The Department's responsibilities in this cooperative undertaking are administered through the Federal Extension Service. In addition to the specific responsibility of administering the Federal funds and the required State offset, this agency provides (a) basic program leadership with respect to phases of programs of national significance, (b) technical assistance to the States in overall program development, (c) help in improving methods of operation in the interest of insuring the maximum effective service being rendered with resources available, (d) assistance with adjustment of programs within States in line with problems of regional or national importance, (e) help with training of staff, (f) with educational programs related to other programs administered by the Department of Agriculture, and similar matters.

By such statements, Extension spokesmen helped to maintain cordial and supportive relationships with both the executive and legislative branches of the Federal government.[36]

Also during this era, a continuous national dialogue within Extension transpired regarding that institution's appropriate work. It took at least two forms, in addition to frequent contacts between FES representatives and the individual State services. The first occurred at the ECOP level, where the FES Director or a representative almost always participated in meetings. This was an important arrangement, which made possible the interchange of information and ideas crucial to an institution constituted on the principle of cooperation.

National reports, prepared and issued during two important crossroad periods of the era, served as the basis for a second more general form of dialogue. The first two reports addressed Extension programming and support services as they might relate to post-war conditions. Among the host of important points made in these reports were strong assertions that Extension should broaden and balance its programming to serve more adequately all of the people, not just farmers. As we have already noted, actual programming during the era did indeed reflect, although to an unknown degree, this shift in commitment. The final document, known as the "Scope Report," appeared in 1958 in response to the stepped-up tempo of social and economic change. It included a comprehensive list of clientele types, and suggested nine categories of Extension programs apparently appropriate for the times.[37]

The cooperative structure also worked well at the State level in a diversity of ways. In terms of program planning, for instance, personnel in States like Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska worked with their legislatures for the repeal of laws that mandated farm bureau sponsorship, and moved on to pressure for more broadly constituted county advisory and planning committees. In response to the growing need for Extension workers to possess good communication skills, in addition to their technical knowledge, States sent specialists and agents to Michigan State University where the National Project in Agricultural Communications (begun in 1954 and sponsored by the USDA and the State services) offered intensive and effective instruction. Several Extension workers from Kansas completed the course at Michigan State, returning home to conduct four-day programs for other workers on the following topics: How People Learn, Understanding People, Means of Communication, and Steps to Effective Communications. To achieve greater breadth in programming, Massachusetts, and probably other States, experimented with organizing some programs on a State or regional basis. Finally, graduate programs for Extension employees helped to spread the national dialogue to the local areas. The nine program categories advocated in the "Scope Report" found their way into more than one advanced degree paper.[38]

As the 1950's drew to a close, all levels of the cooperative Extension structure had begun tentatively to accommodate a rapidly fragmenting national mainstream. The introduction of experimental pilot rural development programs to vitalize pockets of rural poverty, for example, hinted at future trends, as Extension began actively to recruit clients rather than waiting for them to ask for help. Even the rural development programs, however, remained within acceptable boundaries set by the mainstream perspective, as control rested largely in the hands of middle-class agricultural and community leaders. But the times they were a-changin', and soon Extension would be faced for the first time with the challenge of providing programs for people of divergent, possibly contradicting, backgrounds, concerns, and interests.

ERA SEVEN, 1961-1977

People frequently characterize the 1960's and early 1970's as years of social conflict that grew along with the war in Viet Nam and the civil rights movement. Newly self-aware and energized groups rose up to challenge middle-class white male dominance in America, and the Supreme Court, Congress, and

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson responded in support. At the same time, large segments of the general population, surely many traditionally influential rural people, largely retained their mainstream perspective, but were rendered politically impotent by the vocal and organized liberal movement, which enlisted the Federal government to intervene into State and local affairs to right perceived social and economic injustices.

Economist Robert Heilbroner, in his Business Civilization in Decline (1976), defines this era of Federal intervention as a transition period during which a "business-government State" works to save the capitalist system. Ultimately, he asserts, we can expect a completely State-dominated economy. Heilbroner continues to argue that over the past decade or two the government, frequently encouraged by businessmen fearing the consequences of unrestrained competition, has developed a myriad of hierarchically-arranged administrative structures--line agencies--which correspond to and regulate important segments of the capitalist economy. The Federal government has become America's "industrial bureaucracy."[39]

Political scientist, James Sundquist, offers an analysis consistent with Heilbroner's in his Making Federalism Work (1969). Sundquist took as his area of study the "massive Federal intervention in community affairs" that Congress began in 1960, and which was consistent with and supportive of the Federal government's economic activity. Legislation was unique as it clearly asserted national purposes, tried to provide for experimental and flexible approaches to accomplishing them, and required close Federal supervision and control of program efforts. Furthermore, Congress began the heavy use of grants-in-aid financing, which allows much more rigorous central control and accountability than does formula funding--the same formula funding that dominated before 1960 and that is at the heart of the Smith-Lever Act. Although a voluntary adult educational institution, Extension during the era has nevertheless been expected to adopt, as if it were a line agency, quickly and effectively the Federal commitment to ameliorative social action work. As might be expected, this commitment has frequently been frustrated as it conflicted with local sentiment and interests--the old middle-class mainstream. The result has been that Extension now sponsors some programs that serve mainstream interests and others that address action concerns.[40]

Mainstream-oriented agricultural, home economics, and youth programs seem to have continued as usual throughout the era, although spokesmen wisely tended to characterize Extension activity in social action terms. For example, during his 1970 appearance before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations, FES Director E. L. Kirby stated that, "Cooperative Extension programs have been greatly strengthened and identified with important national concerns. . . . Extension is giving aggressive leadership in the States and at local community levels to expand its educational assistance in rural development." With this said, Kirby went on to describe the scope of Extension work, listing traditional and new program categories and taking every opportunity to note that low-income farmers and minority people were being helped. Certainly what Kirby said was true; the question is, to what degree was programming still mainstream and to what degree did it fit the Federal social action commitment? Although systematic investigation is needed to answer these questions, informal conversations indicate that in many places Extension's traditional middle-class clientele continued to command the preponderance of benefits. Local mainstream power structures continued to dominate, as is illustrated in the extreme by the case of Wade v. Mississippi (1974), wherein it was demonstrated that Wade failed to be hired "because of the belief that Holmes County was not ready to accept a black county agent." This conclusion was based on "the announced or known opposition of some county supervisors because of race."[41]

Advisory board composition is another indication of continued middle-class predominance at the local level. A recently-prepared document entitled, "Extension Policies and Practices Concerning Use of Advisory Groups, by State," indicates, in the words of one student of Extension, "that 22 States have 'leaders' on their boards; 17 list Extension clients; the implication is that those in Extension decide its role, thus effectively shutting out others." Although this conclusion may be open to serious question, the data do provide something of a basis for the assertion that old mainstream interests continue to influence Extension programming--probably (and rationally) to serve their own ends. At the same time it must be noted that this influence almost certainly is maintained by default. Clyde Noyes, retired University of Nebraska Extension worker, made this point during an interview in 1974: "I think most (Nebraska) boards are elected at annual meetings. My observation has been that anybody who comes to an annual meeting, any adult citizen, whether he lives on a farm or in town can vote on that Board." As late as 1974, then, mainstream America was alive, kicking, and receiving at least some of the Extension programs it wanted.[42]

In the meanwhile, as Administrator Lloyd H. Davis testified in 1966, "the Federal Extension Service has given considerable emphasis to innovation in the States and the counties in ways of conducting Extension programs. One means by which we have encouraged innovation has been through pilot projects." Because these projects were direct responses to Federally-stated national social action objectives, Congress financed them on the increasingly-popular grants-in-aid basis. As Davis put it, "For these special program purposes it is recognized as appropriate to allocate funds by means other than the formula, and based on special project proposals and plans submitted by the States." Whether people in the State services "recognized" the virtures of non-formula funding as Davis claimed, or merely acquiesced in a fait accompli, deserves further investigation. In either case, they seem to have made the best of the situation by treating the projects as field research, which might provide knowledge, ideas, and models for future Extension programs.[43]

This treatment is indicated partially by reference to several pilot project reports. In 1972, for instance, West Virginia University published "Approaches to University Extension Work with the Rural Disadvantaged: Description and Analysis of a Pilot Effort." Under "A Summary of Evaluation Findings," the report characterized the project as follows:

> A fundamental aim of the project was to establish and conduct programs of university Extension within disadvantaged rural communities previously untouched by Extension and, in the process, generated information concerning ways of successfully assisting the rural poor. Implicit within this aim was the intent to help residents of disadvantaged test communities to improve their social and economic well-being.

Other projects addressed program categories having to do with disadvantaged youth, low-income homemakers, consumers, day care services, community development, and nutrition. In each the attempt was made to define the situation clearly and fairly, and to test a variety of program methods and models which State Extension Services might use in the future.[44]

One of these pilot projects so impressed members of Congress and FES staff that in 1968 special funds were designated for a national Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), wherein

> Funds were used to employ program aides trained and supervised by Extension home economists to teach families how to improve their diets through increased knowledge of the essentials of nutrition, increased ability to select and buy food, increased ability to prepare and serve balanced meals, and an increased ability to manage resources.
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> * * *
>
> The funds were allocated to the States on the basis of an administratively determined formula primarily taking into consideration the number of families in poverty in each State.

Unfortunately, probably because this Federally-imposed work breached the State Services' traditional autonomy, the program has generally failed to be supported fully across the country. As one observer has indicated privately to this writer, the results are mixed: "Note that almost all in Extension credit the EFNEP program with having forced Extension into low-income work. Yet today it is a universally disliked program among many agents. Rarely do families graduated from EFNEP get encouraged to move into other Extension programs." This observation, the truth of which is unverifiable at the moment but almost certainly valid to some degree, indicates a constitutional principle of voluntary educational institutions like Extension: force is not the appropriate means of control; if clients or Extension workers do not give their support, commands from above may be ignored.[45]

Let it be stressed, however, that individual State university-based Extension services have developed a broad scope of innovative means to address directly problems and concerns of national significance, regardless of support of opposition at the local level. In Arkansas, for instance, Extension has worked with organizations and individuals through its "community outreach activities" to provide information and assistance in the increasingly important area of energy conservation. In Massachusetts, the university has generally re-oriented home economics work to encourage more active thought among its clientele: "The program of the Sixties had new dimensions emphasizing . . . 'thinking then doing' rather than 'following.' In the clothing program, for example, homemakers were encouraged to be more analytical in making decisions"--not earth-shattering, but a step in the right direction. The Extension Service in Wisconsin published a step-by-step pamphlet, "Total Resource Development in Wisconsin: A Citizen's Guide to Plans and Action" (1963), which few social action advocates could criticize. And in Michigan, University Extension conducted workshops to prepare advisory council members for their duties and to help them accept and accommodate the trend toward more diverse membership. In Illinois, since 1967, materials to accomplish similar ends have been prepared and distributed.[46]

Finally, the cooperative structure seems to be accommodating in more indirect ways the social action interest, while also maintaining its traditional middle-class clientele. In 1968, for instance, "A People and a Spirit: A Report of the Joint USDA-NASULGC Extension Study Committee," updated the "Scope Report" of a decade earlier by acknowledging and supporting the importance of the Great Society commitment to work on social and economic problems, partially as it advocated better Extension worker preparation. Many graduate programs seem to have responded positively, as is indicated by greater interest and regard for social action concerns in masters' and doctoral papers prepared during the era. In 1974, ECOP approved for publication, "Extension Program Development and Its Relationship to Extension Management Information Systems," a guide to be used at the local level to assist people in accomplishing fairer and more diverse representation in program direction. Organizationally, States like Iowa and Massachusetts moved heavily into multi-county and regional programming, more effectively to address problems of broad social importance, while Missouri and Wisconsin became models of the future by expanding the scope of their operations to make easily available to the client the entire breadth of their universities' expertise. Of course none of this is any guarantee that more appropriate or acceptable programs were actually put into effect at the local level. Nevertheless, the Extension structure has clearly accommodated societal conditions that call for a dual program emphasis to serve middle-class and social action concerns.[47]

CONCLUSION

Over the years Extension has accommodated to varying degrees shifting social and economic conditions and governmental priorities. During the world wars and the Great Depression, it performed non-educational services and administrative functions because public sentiment clearly supported this concerted effort in those years of national emergencies. During the 1920's and 1950's, Extension provided educational programs that supported the dominant agricultural and rural interests of the day. After 1960, when no single class or interest dominated, Extension programming fragmented to provide educational services to diverse, even conflicting, clienteles. In each era, the organizational structure allowed Extension programming to adjust to the larger social dynamic. Were radically new conditions to emerge in the future, there is no reason to believe that Extension would not shift to provide educational services in their regard as well. On the whole, Extension has mirrored and supported rather than reformed our society: it is a reactive, as opposed to a reactionary or a reformist, institution.

Depending upon one's perspective, this reactive character may be judged variously. Some critics point out that America's dispossessed have received too few benefits (if not having actually suffered positive harm) from an organization that has catered mostly to middle-class commercial interests. Others complain that Extension has wasted time and resources on a recalcitrant class of people who fail to appreciate the virtues, if not the inexorability, of business and industry. On either side, and surely there are more, people want Extension to take a stand and support their version of the good. But to do so would mean not only to advocate one view but also to deny the rest; it would assume a consensus of thought and value that does not exist in the larger social, economic, and intellectual arenas; it would constitute a singleminded or closed system, thereby destroying the educational nature of Extension and replacing it with a propagandistic one; it would make Extension into another line agency.

Is all this to say, then, that Extension is doing perfectly well and should be left alone? Not at all. But it must be seen and evaluated as an *educational* institution, that is, as an organization whose functioning should be open to general public inspection and dialogue. If critics find things wrong, those things must be exposed for all to see so that they cannot be continued, the democratic assumption being that people are intelligent enough to work out solutions to their own and society's problems. Does Extension serve all comers? Does Extension allow itself to be bought off by agri-business? Is planning a farce? At the moment, most of us do not know. Perhaps some government employees are satisfied in their own minds about the answers, but this is not enough. We outsiders, "the public," must know too. We must find out; we must organize, if need be, to contribute to the dialogue.

And the same approach should be taken toward the knowledge or research base housed largely at the universities. What and for whom are the scholars studying? Are they being bought off by agri-business? Are they working to further larger purposes or smaller personal goals? These are questions of importance, about which few people know or care enough to make unprejudiced judgments. And again, dialogue, not force or authority, should be the guiding principle: if the public begins to appreciate the scholars and take them seriously, perhaps the scholars will do the same. Until ideas and dialogue are cherished both within and without academe, Extension will, at best, continue to represent vying interests within a society whose basic functioning value is power, not intelligence.

NOTES

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12. Raudabaugh, "Extension Service USDA," IV, 1-2; I, 5-6; 8. ECOP Minutes (1916), 12-21.

13. Baker, County Agent, 14-16; McConnell, Decline of Agrarian Democracy, 47; Earl H. Teagarden (comp.), Kansas Extension Service from 1986 to 1964 (Kansas State University, n.d.), vol. 1, 192.

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County Visits

Susan DeMarco

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COUNTY VISITS#

INTRODUCTION

In July of 1978 I began visiting States to see for myself how the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) delivers programs on the county level. I had asked each of the Federal Extension program administrators (for 4-H, home economics, agriculture and community development) to suggest States to visit, keeping in mind that my goal was to see a cross-section of programs around the country. My plan was to get a feeling for both the similarities and differences in operations in each of the four program areas, from talks to county agents and paraprofessionals, and through interviews with clients.

Originally I had hoped to observe all four programs in all four of Extension's regions but soon realized this was overly ambitious. I narrowed my goal to seeing community development programs, small farm programs, programs with large commercial farms, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, and 1890 programs.* In total, I made 10 visits** between July 1978 and April 1979.

In the past I have criticized Extension for what the system does not do. On these visits my objective was entirely different. I wanted to look at a broad sampling of Extension programs, listen to the people involved in those programs at the county level, and provide the Extension Evaluation Design Team with a description that would put Extension's work in the context of both broad policy issues and local realities.

My usual procedure was to call the Extension Director for each State selected and request that a visit be arranged for certain programs. My one stipulation was that I did not want to spend time in Extension offices but preferred to observe their county programs and interview clients. As a result, most of the conversations I had with county agents and paraprofessionals took place in cars on the way to visit clients.

#*This report is unedited.*

*Suggestions for visits to the black land-grant colleges came from Rudolph Pruden, an ex-Extension Federal employee who served as the Federal liaison to the 1890 institutions. Since his departure that position has remained unfilled.

**The States and programs visited were: Pennsylvania (Community Development-CD), New Jersey (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program-EFNEP), Maine (EFNEP, housing, small farm, 4-H marine), Wisconsin (small farm, CD, EFNEP), New Mexico (small farm, EFNEP), Nebraska (agriculture), Tennessee (1890 programs), Montana (agriculture), Alabama (1890 programs), Texas (small farm).

The choice of places to visit in each State was left to the Director, and the choice of clients was left to the county staff. Constraints on my time (visits were usually from 1-½ to 3 days) also played a role in selection. Everywhere I visited CES programs, the Extension personnel were cooperative in making arrangements, generous with their time and hospitable. Without their assistance it would have been difficult to set up interviews with clients. The CES staff I traveled with was usually present during the interviews, but not always.

Obviously there are drawbacks in letting Extension staff choose the agents, paraprofessionals, and clients that I interviewed. The sample was pre-selected so in all likelihood I was interviewing personnel who the administrators considered effective and clients who were supportive of the program. I took that into account. My primary purpose, however, was not to uncover client dissatisfaction, but to gain a sense of diversity in CES programs and a feel for the county context in which those programs are actually delivered. The most serious limitation in my approach was the probability that I would not meet the "deadwood" on the Extension staff. Since I selected the States and specific programs to visit, I could insure a fairly good cross-section from which to observe variation within the Cooperative Extension System.

After I had made several of these State visits and reported my observations, the Design Team asked me to write a paper containing those observations. I agreed with the condition that the Design Team accept the paper as a subjective analysis focused on variance and county level descriptions of Extension activity. The Design Team concurred in this purpose.

After the paper was presented to the Policy Group at the July 1979 meeting, the decision was made to include the paper in the material sent to Congress. While I am not reluctant to share my observations with members of Congress, I do feel the need to make some clarifying remarks since, when the paper was written, Congress was not the intended audience.

My past work has earned me a reputation as a critic of the Cooperative Extension Service and, as far as it goes, that is a fair characterization. However, I make the distinction between an organizational system (of joint Federal, State, county responsibility and locally run programs) of which I am theoretically supportive and the performance of that system which has, in my opinion, fallen far short of its potential. My purpose in this paper was not to retrace those past criticisms but rather to describe what Extension programs and the institution itself look like to an outsider. In preparing this paper, I was talking, not to the general public, but to those who are part of the Cooperative Extension System. My observations are offered as an assessment from an experienced observer and interviewer, as empirical not scientific data.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

During my travels for the national Extension evaluation, one thing was disturbingly apparent--people feel hostile toward their government, especially the Federal government. The alienation arises, in part, from the frustration of dealing with distant and complex government and the conviction that they are not receiving anything tangible for their taxes. The point here is not whether or not the feeling is justified, simply that it is widespread.

Extension, at least in the minds of the clients I interviewed, is an exception. In fact, Extension is not generally viewed as part of a government agency at all. Many of the people I met were only vaguely aware of its Federal and State ties. Probably the major strength that Extension has going for it is the perception, at least among its own clients, that while government is something out there somewhere, Extension is local and responsive. Clients consider Extension an organization that is able to cut through the red tape of government, or, at the very least, able to interpret government programs and regulations for them. This role is not limited to any one Extension program area and, with the advent of targeted Federal funds for work with low income people, is not limited to any one economic strata. Again and again in my travels, I saw examples of Extension serving as the liaison between groups of people and their own government:

--a well-educated citizen group in a small Wisconsin community trying to revitalize their downtown

--low-income families in Maine and Alabama frustrated in applying for FmHA loans

--residents in Pennsylvania piecing together sources of funding for a county medical clinic

--commercial farmers in Nebraska trying to cope with Federal regulations on pesticide use

--county officials in Wisconsin writing a grant proposal for State and Federal funds to build senior citizen housing

--EFNEP participants from Maine to New Mexico intimidated by the application procedure from becoming eligible for food stamps or supplemental social security benefits

--residents in rural Texas unaware of the existence of a FmHA grant program for housing rennovation

--a low-income community in Tennessee meeting county resistance to supplying the residents with basic services

Extension's liaison service is not strictly educational, or only so if one uses the broad definition that all experiences are educational in some way. I am not in a position to comment on how effectively Extension performs its liaison role, only that such a role exists and clients perceive Extension as an organization capable of helping them find their way through an increasingly intricate web of government bureaucracy. I did not see evidence that Extension uses its liaison role to articulate citizen frustration to the various agencies of government, although such an exchange may happen on an informal basis.

One especially positive characteristic of Extension that impressed me was the courtesy that Extension workers showed their clients. While the staff are often perceived as "experts" by clients, the atmosphere in which Extension workers dealt with clients was one of mutual respect--and that was across the board from EFNEP aides to dairy specialists. I realize I was probably seeing some of the most competent agents and aides on their best behavior. Nonetheless, in home after home I visited, the atmosphere was one of friendship. I did not witness one instance of Extension staff behaving condescendingly to a client.

Extension workers, unlike many others on the public payroll seem to understand that their jobs are to deliver a service to the client's satisfaction and the degree to which Extension workers are willing to get out of their offices and work with clients is the degree to which they are effective in maintaining support. Of course, not all Extension workers perceive this. Mr. Bates, who at the time was the Extension Director in Maine, frankly admitted that getting staff off the campus or out of their county offices into the field was occasionally a problem. I had one glimpse of a rather clinical office. It was a county in Pennsylvania where the Extension office was coldly professional and the county director was merely putting in time until retirement. My visit there was rather happenstance. It could be that many such offices exist in the Extension system.

Despite its strong local identity or maybe even because of it, CES has problems being receptive to new ideas and new people. I found that as an institution, Extension has serious constraints on its flexibility. And, despite its claim of local orientation, Extension programs are remarkably similar, suggesting little fundamental variation from State to State. The following sections provide a more detailed discussion of these general observations.

VARIATION

By and large, my impression of Extension is that of a predominantly middle-class institution that varies from county to county in tone rather than substance. The common programs, university/county connections, education backgrounds, staffing patterns and educational materials lend to the similarities. Cultural differences, personalities, levels of sophistication and organizational forms lend to subtle, but sometimes significant variation.

For the most part, county offices are staffed with the three traditional agents (agriculture, home economics, and 4-H). Many States have added community development specialists, a few have community development staff at the county or multi-county level.

Extension relies heavily on an abundance of printed material. Agents were barely able to talk to me without pushing pamphlets, although they had been instructed not to load me down with materials. The similarity in the type of material is striking, although local staff do prepare and use their own materials. In some counties (particularly in urban and commercial agricultural areas), the staff has access to other forms of communication such as T.V. and radio programming.

A major factor that would seem to work against creative departures in CES programming is that the staff is generally taken from a common mold. The majority of Extension personnel are college educated, usually at a land-grant school, and have backgrounds in agriculture, home economics, or Extension education. On rare occasions Extension employs agents who have different educational backgrounds such as liberal arts and business. The addition to the staff of what are referred to as aides or paraprofessionals for various programs has probably broadened the overall perspective of the staff. Still, the professional employees struck me as very middle-class* and most comfortable working with like-minded people.

The work with low-income clients and minorities is usually handled by aides and an occasional professional who is an exception to the rule. For example, one white home economist in Milwaukee has established especially good rapport with the black community that Extension and various city agencies rely upon.

The professional staff holds university appointments, though the degree to which individuals identify with the university community differs considerably. All of the county agents I talked to felt a strong bond with the county he or she worked in, viewing it as home and feeling an intimate involvement with the people of the county. On the other hand, the reality is that their professional standing is directly tied to their status within the university structure.

The cultural differences I observed were primarily between States, but there were also differences between counties (city-small town-rural, type of agricultural production, ethnic and racial tradition, economic vitality, education, income levels, etc.) Of the States I visited, Wisconsin and Maine offered the most unique overall programs.

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*I use the term not as an income category but to signify a cultural identity with the social and economic mainstream of a community.

In Maine, the difference seemed a consequence, at least in part, of a State Extension Director with a dominating personality and a deep skepticism of the Federal bureaucracy. Mr. Bates (who is now retired but served as State Director for 11 years) was well known for being something of a maverick within the Extension system. Within the State, he made an effort to change things by: minimizing the competitive "ribbon winning" approach in 4-H in favor of cooperation, having the staff elect county directors who serve rotating turns, developing Extension marine programs, and working with organic farmers. Maine was one of the early States to give Extension staff joint appointments (Extension, teaching and research). It was not clear to me from such a brief visit whether Maine's uniqueness has resulted in a fundamentally different Extension system of education and services.

Wisconsin, on the other hand, was clearer. This State has been innovative in both program development and organizational structure. The uniqueness appears to be a result of a progressive social environment. For starters, the Extension Service is integrated into a university-wide system rather than being a part of the College of Agriculture. Extension's Community Development programming began in 1961 with a Ford Foundation grant, long before Federal funding was available. The staff now numbers over 40 agents, the largest number in any State. The counties fund 40 percent of professional salaries, and pay for all the support staff and facilities. This is a much higher percentage of financial support than in most States and may account for the strong community orientation. The university is promoted as a resource for Wisconsin residents rather than an ivory tower of intellectual pursuits. The county agents I traveled with fell more in the category of activists than any other place I visited. They saw themselves not only as responders but also as catalysts for change.

In short, the Extension Service in Wisconsin is traditional inasmuch as it reflects the social history of the State but unusual because that history is so extraordinary. But even saying that, there is virtually no data to measure the social and economic consequences of their programs. Wisconsin's Extension Service may simply exist in a more socially responsive atmosphere without that translating into more socially desirable consequences, or for that matter even different consequences than in other States.

FLEXIBILITY

The visits I made to county Extension programs did not permit me to determine the ability of the institution to respond over time to new clientele and the need for new program emphasis, but I was able to identify a number of factors that have implications for flexibility.

Who Extension identifies with obviously influences programming and client selection. Just how closely Extension must align itself with the local power structure is also an integral institutional consideration. Numerous agents talked to me about this. Generally, they felt it was essential to be on good terms with the established leadership of the county. Leadership, in view, was not limited to the political structure but included a range of groups from civic organizations to local business people to religious organizations. Such groups are usually middle-class, though not necessarily politically powerful. A core of vocal county support was seen as important for survival and agents gave me numerous examples of that support being demonstrated. In some cases, but not all, agents realized they were in a double bind, since reaching out to new clients or starting new programs is often resisted by their traditional supporters. The stories about this crossed over program lines:

--commercially successful farmers resentful of time spent with low-income farmers, organic farmers, and consumers.

--homemaker clubs resentful of home economists who want to offer programs on financial management instead of clothing construction.

--individuals upset about Extension working with "less desirable" members of the community.

In such cases, some agents I met spoke of having to slowly "bring along" the recalcitrants. They spoke of this as a delicate job because they did not want to lose their base of support or create resentment. It was also apparent that the funds for much of the significant change in program direction (small farms, EFNEP, housing, CD, energy) came from Federal and/or State sources rather than local sources. However, some counties did take the initiative to add funds, once the change was perceived as beneficial to the county. The degree to which traditional clients accept such programs seems to be in direct proportion to the threat they perceive the work will be to established programs and the extent to which they see such efforts as "legitimate" activities of Extension.

How Extension views its role in the community is also a major determinant of flexibility. At issue here is whether Extension's responsibility is to provide leadership or merely respond to requests (which is not to suggest that county staff are "out ahead" of the community). County staff in all the States I visited talked a strong line about their educational role. Most became nervous at any suggestion that their educational efforts were influencing change in a particular direction, or providing leadership in setting county priorities. Yet, after spending some time together, the county staff would become more open. A few agents admitted their manipulation (I do not use the word in a negative sense). In other cases, it was apparent from the interviews with clients that some expected opinions as well as information from the agent. It is naive to suppose that leadership does not exist. How and the extent to which it is exercised is, however, not documented. While I can understand the reluctance of Extension workers to admit their influence, I think they are overly cautious in trying to hide it, and the result is to give a distorted picture of their actual role in the community.

I do not mean to imply that the exercise of leadership necessarily increases Extension's flexibility, but simply that it exists, even if very subtly. It could as easily be used to keep Extension mired in outdated programs as to move it on to new ones.

It is also foolish to assume that changes in programs and clientele always emanate from the national level down. It would be interesting to know on what issues local initiative preceded national action, as well as the circumstances under which national priorities are quickly adopted at the local level. It would be instructive to document what factors increase the acceptability of risk-taking by Extension. A crucial ingredient of flexibility is the willingness of county and State Extension offices to experiment, which means risking a higher probability of failure and disapproval.

Organizational structure is another important determinant of flexiblity and thus program emphasis and clientele. It is a frequent practice in the Extension system for the county advisory committee to present the annual Extension budget request and program objectives to the county government. From my own experience in local government, this strategy is considered a most effective mechanism for generating budget support. In effect, a select group of people can effectively influence county funding, the receipt of which is then used as evidence of widespread community approval. In reality, the committee people do not have to be representative of the community, and usually are not. The extent to which Extension includes a broad diversity of people on these committees and rotates terms, is the extent to which it can make any reasonable claims to wide citizen support. Unless one is very familiar with a county, it is impossible to know how representative an advisory committee is from a list of names. But there are some indicators.

Membership on committees is usually a result of an individual's involvement in one or more Extension programs. The person may not be totally satisfied with all aspects of the program but he or she is likely to be a satisfied client who does not question the value of Extension as an institution. Many committee members have long (5-20) years of service. Advisory committee input in program planning varies widely, but even if it is significant it would only represent a narrow spectrum of community opinion. Discussions in a number of States revealed that often advisory committee members so identify with past programs they are unwilling to try new projects. One county in Maine has gone as far as limiting terms and soliciting membership from participants in the EFNEP program. Often EFNEP is the only entry Extension has into low-income and/or minority communities.

Another important factor in flexibility is the support given for new program direction by the individual county directors and State Director. Even in a State like Wisconsin, with its socially progressive climate, not all Extension administrators can easily accept a change in priorities, especially when imposed from the national level.

My supposition is that State Extension Directors through their power of appointments, promotion, hiring, assignments, and liaison role within the university can have substantial influence on the general direction Extension moves in their State. Clearly some directors want to exert such influence, but how much they do is undocumented. There may be some directors unable or unwilling to have much influence and that probably depends on the personalities involved and the organizational relationships with the larger university system.

The level of university backup (research-teaching) appears to have significant affects on program content and, therefore, which clients are served. Not that all backup has to come from the State land-grant college. A few agents talked of looking to other institutions and agencies in the State, and even outside the State, for appropriate materials. Programs with an organized constituency, such as commercial agriculture, have less trouble interesting campus faculty members than say a project on cooperative marketing for small producers. Trying to provide assistance in an area where little research exists and where graduating students are uniformed can be discouraging, especially for an organization which prides itself on providing information.

I raise the point about flexibility because it seems to set the general climate in which decisionmaking takes place. Understanding how decisions are made is an important part of describing Extension's relationships with the public, other institutions, and various levels of government. If the national evaluation is to analyze adequately how Extension identifies priorities, develops programs, and selects clients, then we need to document the range of influences that shape the decisionmaking process. My visits have left me with the impression that decisionmaking in Extension is affected by a wide range of influences that are constantly changing, depending on the issue, place, time, and individuals involved. Too often Extension responds glibly to the question of how decisions were made. It is only with probing that one begins to unravel the many factors that led to a particular decision.

For example, during a visit to Shawno County, Wisconsin, I asked the CD agent how he had decided to make industrial development his top priority. His initial explanation was that the need was "obvious." The county was losing young people who could not find jobs and the unemployment and underemployment rate in the county was high. During the course of the day we spent together, however, other determining factors emerged. Prior to coming to work for Extension, John had run his own very successful business. He was on a first name basis with most of the bankers in the county. His many years as a private businessman gave him expertise and credibility in the field of business that few Extension agents have. County revenues were being hurt by the small industrial tax base. There is support in the State government for industrial development, especially where it meshes with State rural economic development plans. The Extension administration, although a little nervous about having a staff member from outside their traditional ranks, is also proud of his accomplishments. The longer I pursued the topic, the more factors appeared to have influenced the decision to make industrial development a priority.

This was not the only instance an agent's initial response was an abrupt explanation that the need was apparent or that a needs assessment had been conducted. With a little probing, other factors almost always emerged. Common sense would tell us that all counties face an abundance of serious problems that could legitimately be addressed by Extension. The reason certain ones are chosen over the others is never as simple as "it was an obvious need."

Unless we see the decisionmaking process as fluid we are going to get basically meaningless descriptions of how priorities are established and client groups identified. Even in long-established programs, I would guess that there is usually a complex set of influences operating which could conceivably be in different combinations from case to case. Some of the influences I was able to identify (with no regard to priority) are:

1. experience, interest and personality of county agents
2. input from Extension directors and State specialists
3. county government
4. State legislature
5. governor
6. State and county agencies
7. available funding (beyond Extension monies)
8. input from county and State surveys, advisory groups, county and local organizations, and local leadership
9. State and regional development plans
10. research underway at the university
11. economic importance of certain commodities and natural resources
12. emergency situations (drought-energy shortages, etc.)
13. public inquiries for assistance
14. targeted Extension funds from the Federal government

Given the wide range of influences and the diversity of situations, it may be impossible to develop one decisionmaking model. That is all right. What we need to know is which of these influences (and in what combinations) are the most significant in shaping the decisions that Extension makes about the programs it will offer and the people it will serve.

CONCLUSION

The following sections are observations about the individual programs I visited. While each program has characteristics specific to it, it was through these visits that I was able to draw some overall conclusions about Extension and extract four significant general characteristics:

- --Extension is more likely to play a role (e.g., assist small farmers, be a liaison for citizen groups) than to have specific program goals or a coherent program strategy into which its work fits.

- --Extension is predominantly a middle-class organization, and that identity strongly influences the programs it conducts and the clients it serves. When Extension does serve low-income clients, it relies on the use of paraprofessionals and Federal funds.

- --Extension has perfected the skills of institutional survival on a local level. In pursuit of that goal, Extension, as an institution, takes few risks, although individuals within Extension occasionally do.

- --Extension is an organization that establishes personal relationships with clients. As a result, clients are likely to be active and vocal in their support of Extension programs.

EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

Extension's EFNEP program is a Federally funded educational program aimed at helping low-income families improve their dietary habits through increased knowledge about nutrition, including food selection, preparation, and preservation.

The EFNEP program is structured to use professional home economists to train and supervise paraprofessionals (aides) who work directly on a one-to-one basis with low-income clients. Aides are usually recruited from the community being served. The professional staff is responsible for designing and producing the materials (training information and the teaching materials) used by the aides. A few basic sets of teaching materials were developed by national task forces of Extension home economists.

The status of aides within the system varies from State to State. Generally the salaries are low, starting at minimum wage. In many States, aides are not hired as university staff, thus they receive no benefits and have no in-house promotional opportunities.

In my visits to the EFNEP program in four States, all of the professionals I met (with the exception of New Jersey) were white females with traditional backgrounds in home economics. The professionals divided into two bodies of opinion about EFNEP activity. One group perceives EFNEP as strictly nutrition education and adheres to the rather rigid guidelines that mandated nutrition education as the exclusive focus of the program. The second group believes that while nutrition education is the primary goal of the program, it cannot be the exclusive focus. This second group of home economists were at first reluctant to elaborate on their views. However, as I spent more time with them, their initial reluctance gradually broke down. They explained that it is very difficult to teach nutrition to low-income clients who are beset by numerous problems, some much more immediately pressing than their diets, unless the aides have the flexibility to help clients solve these other problems. Of the dozen or so EFNEP aides I interviewed, most (New Jersey again being the exception) were quite often about the need to provide assistance to clients on a variety of problems in order to gain their confidence and trust. Examples of this included assistance with housing difficulties, finding adequate transportation, and coping with the red tape of government bureaucracy. My few dozen interviews with EFNEP clients tended to reinforce the perception of the program aides.

My interviews also left me with the conviction that even if the government could afford to pay professionals to make home visits to the poor, they would have great difficulty gaining access to homes or establishing rapport. The use of nutrition aides, who can work with low-income clients, is essential to the program's operation. My discussions with the aides, as well as some of the clients, revealed that one of the first hurdles the aides had to overcome was the suspicion that they might be social workers sent to spy on the family. This was particularly true when the aide was not personally known by the potential client or had not been referred by a friend or relative.

Most of the aides impressed me as genuinely interested in the welfare of their clients and empathetic to the problems of low-income families. They had a tendency to be a little "motherly." On the other hand, they were also proud of their work, quite dedicated, and surprisingly resourceful helping clients with a wide range of problems. No doubt I saw some of the most effective aides. Most of them had been with the program for at least five years. All the aides I talked with were women and they represented a variety of ages, races, and ethnic groups. Each of the aides indicated that her job was the most dignified and challenging work she had ever done, not to mention getting paid for it. They clearly saw the job as a special opportunity.

The EFNEP aides are given a 6-week training course with periodic in-service training by Extension home economists. The level of comprehension reflects this level of training and is limited to very basic concepts such as the four food groups and shopping tips. I am not sure their training made the aides significantly more knowledgeable about nutrition than their clients. What it did provide was the rhetorical context of basic home economics which might often be unfamiliar to the clients.

Admitting no particular expertise in the field of nutrition, I nonetheless think one of the weakest aspects of the program is the poor quality of materials being used. The content is much like the type I was exposed to 20 years ago in home economics classes. A great deal about human nutrition has been learned in the intervening years. Certainly our food culture has been substantially changed (less than one-half of the American diet today comes from the basic four food groups), and we face the negative effects on our health of excess consumption of sugar, fat, salt, food additives, meat, junk food, and highly processed food. To still use the basic four food groups as the basis of teaching nutrition seems wholly inadequate. Nor did the materials I saw take into account the ethnic and cultural diversity of the clients.

For example, on one visit in Jersey City, New Jersey, a lesson given to a group of Puerto Rican women on the basic four concluded with a demonstration of how to prepare tuna noodle casserole. The home economists present seemed to think because the lesson and materials were in Spanish that the culture gap had been bridged. When I suggested they might develop a recipe more suitable to the Spanish cuisine, the home economists were highly defensive.

Some of the consumer education materials also left a great deal to be desired. One lesson on acceptable shopping habits (including not squeezing fruit and returning products to the right shelf) seemed geared more to promoting supermarket and marketing needs (i.e.: cellophane wrapped, untouchable produce) than concerned with the nutritional well-being of clients.

The clients of EFNEP are primarily low-income female homemakers (of all ages including the elderly) although there are also programs for children of both sexes. From my conversations with the clients, they apparently come to the program in a variety of ways, most commonly:

--at the suggestion of a friend, neighbor, or relative who is familiar with the program

--because they are a friend, neighbor or relative of the aide

--recruited by the aide (door-to-door)

--on referral from a social service agency or organization

Most of the clients I spoke with had been in the program a long time, some as many as five years. If the program simply teaches some rather basic concepts about nutrition, five years is an unreasonably long time to do so. In fact, it was not clear to me after numerous interviews, whether a poor diet is a primary problem for these clients--at least not any more so than the rest of the American public. One visit in Newark, New Jersey, was to an Italian grandmother who had homemade soup on the stove and a vegetable garden, fruit trees, and grape vines growing in the yard, none of which was a consequence of visits from the aides who she credited with teaching her how to get her husband to eat new vegetables. I suspect she enjoyed the company. Another woman (in Albuquerque) with the children in elementary school was preparing homemade tortillas. Again, this was not a result of visits from the EFNEP aide. She had always made her own tortillas. This client had a multitude of serious problems, starting with very poor health--non-diet related. It was apparent from our conversation that the value for her of the home visits was the chance to discuss her health and other "real" problems. One new client, a 16 year old mother in Maine, lived in a trailer in a rural area far from neighbors. The girl was geographically isolated and anxious over the responsibilities of motherhood. For her the visits from the aide were contact with a sympathetic person in the outside world and she continued to see the aide despite objections from her in-laws.

All of the clients I interviewed praised the program for its "help." What they considered helpful was rarely limited to lessons on nutrition. It was also obvious that the affection between the aides and their clients was quite genuine.

I asked most of the EFNEP clients one question about alternative programs. If the government were to put more money into a program would you rather it be this one (EFNEP) or the food stamp program? To a person they answered "food stamps."

My overall impression is that the real impact of EFNEP is as a fairly effective one-to-one social assistance program. It does a number of things:

1. targets the poor as clients for Extension
2. provides challenging jobs as aides for low-income women with limited formal education
3. puts money into poor communities in the form of salaries to resident aides

4. provides some basic information about the nutritional value of food including its preparation, selection, and preservation

5. helps people on a one-to-one basis solve a variety of problems from how to fill out forms to how to budget the family income

6. serves as an outreach arm into low-income communities for Extension and other government agencies

I observed in my visits at least two institutional benefits of the EFNEP program. One is that the exposure to low-income clients and competent aides helps to broaden the outlook of the professional Extension staff. The second falls under the heading of "boosting the government's image." The EFNEP clients saw this as one program that did not hassle people and, while it has no momentary benefits to distribute, it did extend friendship and service.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

In the community development area, Extension plays four basic roles, which I have categoried as convening, consulting, educating, and organizing.

CONVENING

Extension has a reputation for being effective in getting people to turn out for meetings, especially in rural areas. In Pennsylvania, for example, the Extension Service was asked by the State to help organize public meetings around the State on land-use planning. Apparently, before approaching Extension the State sponsored a few meetings itself with notably poor public attendance. After Extension's involvement, according to Extension staff, attendance improved markedly. Such examples point out, in my view, Extension's enviable ability to reach and motivate people.

While holding meetings is a traditional role for Extension and one of its undeniable strengths, the difference here was that the topic is so controversial Extension was criticized by some for just acting as convener. Nonetheless, even in this instance people did attend the public meetings and the issue of land-use planning was raised and hotly debated at the county level.

CONSULTING

I separate this role from the more purely educational one. The clearest example I saw was in three counties in Wisconsin where local citizens are trying to revitalize their downtown areas. The expertise provided through the community development staff came from various departments in the university. For example, graduate architecture students had designed about half a dozen plans for improving the appearance and parking facilities of one small town. It is the kind of service companies and government normally hire. In these cases the communities were either too small for local government to afford a private firm or the people involved were concerned citizens who simply did not have the financial resources to hire the expertise they needed.

The participating students with whom I discussed the program were strongly motivated by the opportunity to work on "real" projects and the challenge and experience offered by those projects. The citizen groups I met with were convinced that the momentum for undertaking such an effort would have dissipated without the support and expertise Extension was able to provide.

While there is an educational aspect to such work, my overall impression was that citizen groups (even highly-motivated, knowledgeable groups) often lack the expertise (or the ability to pay for it) that can make the difference between accomplishing their goals and merely complaining. Providing this expertise by drawing on the skills of university-based people is a kind of public consulting service completely within the tradition of past Extension endeavors.

Whether improving the looks of downtown areas and making shopping there more convenient is enough to stem the tide to highway shopping center development is, of course, another question. As far as I could tell, Extension was conducting these projects in response to community interest without considering whether they would be an effective strategy for reaching the goal of downtown revitalization.

A slightly different version of consulting assistance was apparent on a visit to Pennsylvania. Indiana county residents, wanting to expand health care services, established a medical center in 1977 with assistance from Extension and other institutions. It took about three years to accomplish with many delays and setbacks. From what I could ascertain, Extension's role was to provide certain skills (such as grant writing), help with contacts (at commercial bank and FmHA), and offer encouragement. It is not clear how critical this role was to the success of the project. The community development agent who was directly involved in the project takes a low profile for himself and Extension.

This brings up a delicate issue for evaluating community development work. If a project is to be perceived by the community as theirs, it is essential that Extension not dominate the process. Thus, trying to prove that community development specialists play a pivotal role may be most difficult when they, in effect, are the most successful at supporting local initiative and responsibility.

At any rate, the medical center is operating successfully. Just how much credit Extension as an institution can legitimately claim for that is unclear, despite the many publications that use the medical center project as an example of successful Extension work in community development.

EDUCATING

The current emphasis of the community development program in Pennsylvania is working with county government officials. The vast majority of Pennsylvania's counties are rural, with governments widely viewed as most effective in seeing that roads are repaired. Under recent State and Federal laws, such as water and sewer guidelines, county governments have acquired expanded responsibilities. Extension is working with some county boards of supervisors to make the members more aware of these new obligations and encourage a more active role for county government vis-a-vis the State and Federal government.

This work, as far as I could tell, was straightforwardly educational, much the same as Extension's educational efforts to inform farmers about new pesticide regulations. The difference, however, is that in this case Extension's work is being done with an official government body, not individuals, and under the heading of community development. While educating county board members to exercise their authority more effectively might potentially give local officials more ability to serve local needs, it may also have unintended side effects. In my mind it was not clear how this improved local government capability would affect the interests of all segments of the community. The one county board member I interviewed in Pennsylvania was appreciative of Extension's education effort with the board, but resentful of what he viewed as Federal and State intrusion into local affairs. The site we visited in his county--a processing facility for drinking water--was so deteriorated it frequently broke down and left the residents (rural, low-income) without any water.

It is almost always the more economically influential people in a county (lawyers, doctors, business people, bankers, large farmers) who serve on county boards and historically they have shown little inclination to respond to the needs of low-income residents. When I raised this point with community development specialists, they seemed bewildered. Yet I have lived in States where local people working to open the local political process to greater public participation have had to struggle with the entrenched power of county officials to achieve their goals. Thus, a community development project that does not simultaneously educate citizen groups on how to gain access to local decisionmaking is really only half a project because it neglects the ultimate recipients of county government services. It is an example of Extension focusing on a particular project and ducking the potential social and economic consequences, or possibly not understanding all the political ramifications.

ORGANIZING

Organizing is a role Extension personnel are least comfortable with, or, if they are, least likely to acknowledge. I did see an example in Milwaukee where Extension, while not the primary force, was tangentially involved in an effort to help organize a black, inter-city neighborhood. The residents had formed an organizational network to put pressure on local politicians and agencies to improve services such as garbage pick-up, street repairs, park maintenance, street lighting, etc. I took a walking tour with a group of local residents.

It was a familiar story: middle and low-income housing (mostly single family dwellings) being turned into rental property, neighborhoods being allowed to deteriorate, the loss of local businesses with stores sitting empty and boarded up, and inadequate public services. I asked the person (a city employee) most familiar with the project why Extension's involvement was valuable. His answer was that Extension's biggest advantage was its link to the university. First, he explained, it meant Extension was one step removed from direct political pressure and second, being educational in purpose, Extension could assign staff and attempt experimental community development projects that city budgets would never permit. While all this makes sense, I never did find out what in particular Extension had done that was either politically risky or experimental, with the possible exception of simply being associated with clients who were low-income blacks pressuring the city establishment.

The one other example I observed of Extension's organizing activity was the work of Tennessee State agents in helping to promote the creation of civic and neighborhood organizations among low-income people. The premise here was the same as Milwaukee's: as individuals, poor people have very little leverage with or access to the political system. As a group, however, they can increase their visibility and power.

CONCLUSION

Extension's involvement in community development seems to be as a player of many roles. Those roles can be used to encompass just about any activity Extension staff decides to pursue, as long as the work is done with groups rather than individuals. What actually constitutes "development" on a local level is a question for which Extension has only vague answers. My impression is that Extension's vagueness is not necessitated by the program's need to respond to local initiative but because Extension has no clear perception of what it means by "development."

The concept of development does not exist in isolated purity. My view of agriculture development, for instance, differs greatly from either the World Bank's view or International Harvester's view. It is not a sufficient answer for Extension to claim that community development work means responding to community needs. The community has many needs and the "community" is hardly homogeneous. Maybe a simple definition is unworkable and inflexible but certainly a description of the boundaries of what is meant by community development is possible. After all, it is not possible for the program to avoid having direction. Without a coherent program strategy the values, capabilities, and experiences of the individuals on the program staff are likely to dominate program direction. Perhaps Extension, wary of controversy, has purposely chosen the refuge of vagueness. That would be rather ironic since Extension began by being far less bashful about endorsing a particular view of agricultural development and really made its reputation by promoting a technological revolution in farming. While many might disagree with Extension's goal, it was, at least, clearly stated.

SMALL FARM PROGRAM

Having observed Extension's Small Farm Program in five States, it is obvious that there is no systemwide agreement on which small farmers* Extension should be assisting and how. There is not even agreement on which farmers should be classified as small for purposes of this program. Small can refer to various levels of: acreage, farm sales, net farm income, total income, relative size compared to neighbors or any combination of these. Small producers can be full-time or part-time farmers, though it is likely that most do some off-farm work. The determination of who is a small-scale farmer and thus a potential client for the program is subject to a wide diversity of views, definitions, and standards among the States within the Extension system.

Despite the internal differences, the population of small producers who could conceivably benefit from Extension assistance is large, no matter how one defines such farmers. The staff of the small farm program has not waited for definitional disputes to be resolved, they have pressed ahead with their work, which raises a rather fundamental question. What is the objective of Extension's small farm program? Some staff think small producers need help getting bigger. Others focus on production techniques to increase output without necessarily expanding farm size. Some paraprofessionals are working on developing new market outlets. Others believe the primary need of small farmers is improving management skills. And an occasional opinion was expressed that farming for the small producer is essentially an avocation so the best way to help is to create off-farm employment opportunities to supplement farm income.

In the absence of a national consensus on program objectives, the county agents and aides take the position that their job is to help small farmers however they can. The thrust of their work seems to be determined by a combination of factors including the personal inclinations of the staff and the receptivity of individual farmers to the program. I had the impression that Extension was doing a second culling, going back to those farmers (or the children of those farmers) who had been bypassed by Extension's regular agricultural program. I also had the impression that Extension has jumped into this without having an overall analysis of the structural disadvantages small producers face, a coherent strategy for improving their position, or a comprehensive program for addressing the multitude of problems that plague small-scale farmers.

As a result, the county staff is responding to these farmers much the way one would expect, relying on the technologies and methods which have been used with industralized agriculture and overlooking production and marketing alternatives specifically designed for small-scale enterprises. The only evidence I saw that such information was reaching farmers through Extension programs were designs for low-cost farrowing houses which farmers could build themselves, and farmer's markets. I am not sure information on viable alternatives exists at most land-grant colleges which, theoretically, provide the information/research backup for Extension programs.

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*I use the term small farmer throughout this section to identify the clients I interviewed, most of whom were also low-income and did off-farm work.

The use of paraprofessionals is a notable bright spot in the program. These agricultural aides are usually farmers (often successful small producers or retired farmers) recruited from the community, trained by Extension, and paid to work on a one-to-one basis with clients. They constitute whatever credibility and outreach the program has among the low-income, small-scale producers. The aides use the demonstration method of education perfected by Extension years ago. The employment of agricultural aides allows Extension to stretch its budget (aides are paid a good deal less than professionals) and thereby reach more clients. A second, and possibly more important reason for employing aides, is to gain access to and win the confidence of small farmers, who if they know of Extension programs at all associate them with large-scale farming. Numerous clients expressed to me their surprise at Extension's interest in their small operations.

The county agents themselves are often so academically oriented in their teaching approach--relying on brochures, mass media, and group meetings--that they are often isolated from this entire sector of the agricultural community.

Despite its limitations, I was left with the impression that Extension's program can provide a useful service to struggling small-scale farmers. My optimism comes from interviews with clients. A sentiment expressed in varying ways by the clients I talked to was--now that Extension is finally paying attention to us small guys, please don't kill the program. Once the initial period of distrust was overcome by the aides, the farmers felt the program was valuable. A few pointed out that they could not afford to hire the consultation Extension provides for free. One dairy farmer in Wisconsin went as far as to say that ending the program would be like "cutting our throats."

But it was in Texas that the program impressed me the most. The program was started there in 1969 at Texas A&M. In April 1972 the program was transferred to Prairie View A&M, the State's black land-grant college. Currently, the program is supported with Federal funds and employs 22 agricultural aides in 20 counties, all of which are among the poorest in the State.* The aides start at $3.13 an hour, but most are paid more since they have been with the program for many years. They also receive benefit coverage similar to the professional staff. The three aides I made farm visits with were so impressively articulate and knowledgeable I asked the Extension Director if they were exceptional. He said no, they were considered very good but that there were others equally good. These three aides have been with the program since the start. In fact, of the original group of 10 program aides hired in 1969, only two have left. All three aides are part-time small farmers and each has lived in the county for many years.

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*Texas has a total of 254 counties.

Extension expects the aides to work with approximately 25 clients on an intensive basis, which means weekly visits, and be available to respond to other requests for assistance. To qualify, clients must be low-income and make a large percentage of their total income from the farm operation, although no documentation is required.

Without going into more detail about the Prairie View program, what was most impressive about the aides, besides their intelligence and enthusiasm, was the scope of their work. They are helping individual farmers develop production skills but they are also working on larger marketing problems. One aide had organized small farmers in the area to sell their feeder pigs cooperatively and had increased the number of auction outlets in the area. In another county the aides, with the help of the county agent, had tackled a supply problem. Until two years ago the tomato plants purchased by these small east Texas growers came from the Rio Grande Valley. There were occasional disruptions in supply and often the plants were diseased. Last year with the assistance of an Extension specialist in San Antonio, the plants came from a nursery there, disease free. This year the plants were supplied by a local nursery. A loosely organized group of small vegetable growers had also been put together by one aide who is trying to develop new market outlets for their produce. The Texas program was one of the few examples I observed of the program addressing structural as well as production problems.

Solving problems of adequate commercial outlets for small growers is not a major thrust of Extension's program. Yet it was a problem repeatedly expressed by many small-scale farmers, from organic producers in Maine to apple growers in New Mexico. Most small-scale farmers have no access to the larger regional wholesalers (who simply refuse to deal with them) and many worry that a jump in overall production in their area would be in excess of what could be realistically absorbed by local outlets, including the direct farmer consumer markets that have been set up (some with the help of Extension).

Another potential problem occurred to me while attending Tuskegee's Annual Farmer's Conference. Very small-scale (25-50 acres) farmers were being advised to switch production into specialized commodities with high returns such as honey, muscadine grapes, berries, and certain vegetables. While that makes sense on the face of it, what will happen to the price of these commodities if volume is substantially increased? And, equally important, will there be marketing channels for the increased volume? Since the longer-term implications were not a part of the program design, there is the likelihood that the project will create as many problems as it solves.

One final comment. While in Maine, I talked with a family that farmed organically. In recent years, they have seen Extension's contact with organic producers increase. Yet they felt that it was far from adequate and were particularly eager to see Extension more involved in organic demonstration projects and organic production research. Apparently the Extension Services in New England, unlike many parts of the country, are responding at least marginally to the needs of organic farmers. I think it would be instructive to analyze the specific factors moving these States to respond.

COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

I went to Nebraska to talk to what might be referred to as the back-bone of Cooperative Extension Service support, medium to large-scale family farmers. My objective was to find out how these clients used the Extension system and solicit their recommendations for improvement.

My interviews, since they were arranged by Extension, were not a random sampling of commercial family farms or of Extension's farm clientele. All the farmers I interviewed were familiar with Extension programs, their families participated in one or more Extension programs, some served on Extension advisory committees and most could be described as community leaders. In short, the six families I talked with are Extension's middle-class, mid-west farm clientele.

The farms varied in size, age of farmer, and type of production but the factor common to all is that they were viewed by Extension, and presumably by their neighbors, as successful family farmers, which is not to say that in the winter of 1979 they were necessarily satisfied with commodity prices or farm policies. The farmers were generous with their time, all the interviews lasted at least one hour. The focus of my questions was on Extension's agriculture program.

The clearest trend underway is the use of Extension specialists (usually based at the State land-grant college and assigned multi-county or Statewide responsibility) for information and problemsolving. The reason for this is fairly obvious. Many larger-scale family farmers are well-informed, educated, and more knowledgeable about their commodity production than the county agents. When such farmers have problems they cannot solve themselves, the situation usually requires the expertise of a specialist.

County agricultural agents are used, most often but not always as the farmers' initial contact, thus serving as an entry point to Extension/university services. The agent is, so to speak, the organizational presence of the system at the local level. County agricultural agents organize meetings, play a coordinating role when certain emergencies develop (drought, hail, insect infestation, etc.), and refer clients to services outside Extension's scope of activity. This pattern seems to imply that the county staff may be becoming more important to the process of information transfer and education than they are to the actual content, i.e., acting as a linkage with sources of information and assistance.

Despite the sophisticated production level at which the farmers I interviewed operated, they were quite outspoken in their support for maintaining county-based agricultural generalists. That support seems to arise from various perceptions. First to assure themselves access to a system that is not only county-based but also State, regionally, and nationally organized. Second, county agents are a symbol that the Extension system intends to remain focused on the individual's needs. Third, despite their competence, some farmers are reluctant to directly approach university-based personnel.

I might mention that Nebraska is a State with a very strong local commitment to Extension. In Nebraska the counties contribute a large percentage of Extension's budget. Some counties have authorized money for specific projects even when there were no matching funds from the State or Federal level. The strong local identification is combined with a rather practical business orientation on the part of the farmers. This environment, and thus the attitudes of the farmers, may not be typical of all States.

The quality of services delivered by Extension--even in one of its primary areas of work--depends in large measure on the energy and innovations of the local agents. Saline County has two examples of fairly creative programming in which a number of other counties around the State are involved. One is an irrigation scheduling project that allows participating farmers to hook into a computer that will tell them just when and how much water to apply to their fields. The average farmer participating has reduced water use from 18 inches a season to 11 inches. The farmers I interviewed are enthusiastic about the project primarily because it saves them money. The broader implications for energy and water conservation is a secondary issue even though Saline is a county where most farmers have some form of irrigation and water tables are being depleted. The second project, done through Extension with the cooperation of the University of Nebraska Medical School, is the testing of blood samples from farm families for possible pesticide contamination. The project in Saline started with a dozen families and now involves about triple that number. The results have startled the volunteers and raised their consciousness about the hazards of working and living around dangerous chemicals. It is not clear, however, what educational or medical followup there will be.

Despite some shortcomings, projects such as the two above ought to be evaluated for their wider applicability, their short and long-term impact and their consequences for the community at large. It would also be instructive to analyze the process by which such projects were introduced, the degree of acceptance, and the costs versus the benefits. As far as I could tell, however, there was no planning underway for such an assessment.

All of the farmers I interviewed subscribed to numerous farm magazines and had other sources of agriculture information. They used Extension to verify the claims of private industry and as a source of what they believed was unbiased information. The farmers pointed out that the articles in farm publications were often written by Extension specialists or university researchers. Their major complaint about such articles was the difficulty of applying the information to their specific farm situation.

The reoccurring suggestion farmers made for improving the services offered by Extension is in the area of marketing assistance. Their general attitude can be summed up as follows. There is not much more assistance that we need in commodity production, we do that and do it well. With the exception of occasional emergencies (such as grasshopper plagues), introduction of new regulations (such as certification for pesticide applications) and long-term basic research, adequate production is not an issue. The problem, as these farmers saw it, was marketing--having a market for their products, transporting their products to market, and most important, getting an acceptable price.

When the marketing assistance topic was raised in the presence of the county agents, it was received with a mixture of embarrassment and good-natured ribbing. The subject had obviously come up before. The county agents expressed serious reservations about getting too deeply involved in providing marketing advice--although it was not clear how deep was too deep or what, up to this point, Extension had provided in the way of marketing assistance. From what I could tell, the basic reluctance to provide marketing assistance was a reluctance to endanger Extension's credibility by giving advice about something as volatile as market prices.

The farmers, on the other hand, felt that this was an area in which they really needed assistance and Extension should stop backing away. They argued that Extension could at least provide certain types of marketing information to farmers and give their best counsel. Apparently there are private firms that provide such services but the charges are steep.

I asked each of the farmers who they thought was the legitimate clientele for Extension. The response in every case was "everyone--we all pay taxes." However, when probed it became apparent that the willingness to share was based on the condition that sharing would not mean a cutback in services for farmers.

I have tried in this discussion to refrain from the use of the masculine pronoun when talking about farmers. It is intentional. In most of the homes I visited, the wives participated in the interviews. I had the strong impression that they are full partners in running the farms and knowledgeable about all aspects of the farm operations. Some of the women regularly attend seminars and meetings Extension sponsors on various aspects of farm production and management. One woman said she attends these sessions even when her husband cannot. Nonetheless, Extension usually gears its agricultural work to male farmers--ignoring women or relegating them to the home economics program. All the county agricultural agents I have ever met have been men. Extension is very family oriented, so children and women are welcome, but traveling around the country has made it clear that the male farmers are still considered the primary clients. Program segregation by sex begins, of course, long before the agent arrives in the county. Land-grant colleges have channeled women into "appropriate" majors. As far as I can tell, Extension has not done much, with the possible exception of some of their 4-H work and the occasional agent with a more enlightened attitude, to correct the sexual bias of its agricultural program.

I have one additional comment before closing the discussion of my observations on Extension's work in commercial agriculture. I made a very brief trip to Montana to interview managers of large ranches. My purpose was to find out whether they used Extension, and, if so, how. None of the managers I interviewed are regular clients of Extension in the same sense that the family farmers in Nebraska are. I am cautious about extending my impressions too broadly because the Montana sample was so small, and I have no previous first-hand experience to draw upon as I do with family farmers and ranchers.

Managers of large ranches appear to use Extension resources, but infrequently and very selectively. The really large-scale, corporate-owned ranches often do their own research and can afford and do hire the expertise they need. They apparently are unlikely to look toward the research done at any one State land-grant school as the primary source of data. Thus, my impression is that the existence of the Extension Service is basically irrelevant to their operations and, at most, just one of many other resources they can avail themselves of if they wish.

1890 PROGRAMS

My purpose for visiting black land-grant colleges in the south was to see if their Extension effort reached low-income minorities and whites and how well the 1890 colleges served that particular clientele. My purpose was not to explore the institutional relationships between the predominantly white 1862 schools and the black 1890 schools since that is being addressed in other parts of the evaluation. It became readily apparent, however, that the institutional relationships and the politics surrounding them could not be easily ignored.

By way of background, the initial 1914 Smith-Lever funding, and all Federal and State Extension monies went to the 1862 land-grant colleges. These universities were not obligated to share any of that funding with their black counterparts and they did not. Despite documented evidence of blatant civil rights violations* throughout the Extension Service in the south, no Federal funds were allocated to the 1890 colleges before 1971, nor were Federal Extension funds ever withheld from the 1862 colleges. In 1970 Federal Extension funds were appropriated and specially earmarked for the 1890 schools. The funds were administered through the 1862 institutions on the grounds that it was desirable to preserve one Extension identity in each State. In 1977 Federal funds were permitted to go directly to the 1890 schools with the proviso that their work continue to be coordinated with the 1862 schools. Because of this restriction, as well as the lack of any requirement for State or local matching funds for the black land-grant schools, the 1862 and 1890 colleges cannot avoid a "relationship," even if they would like to.

TENNESSEE

My first visit was Tennessee State University. Dr. Farrell, the Extension Director, was very frank about the difficulties of running an Extension program in cooperation with the University of Tennessee. At present Tennessee State has staff in nine counties out of a total of 95. The extent of cooperation at the local level differs considerably from county to county depending on how well the local staff of the two institutions have been able to integrate their programs and establish good working relationships. In both of the counties I subsequently visited the cooperation is considered good. At the State level, the relationship is strained.

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*See reports and hearings of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1965 to 1975. Also Strain versus Phillpot, Federal Count Decision, September 1971.

Dr. Farrell complained about trying to achieve visibility for Tennessee State. In essence, their staff is housed in county offices known to the public as University of Tennessee Extension so their accomplishments are often credited to the University. In addition many of the political powers in the State are University of Tennessee alumni who favor it with publicity, praise, and dollars. Dr. Farrell felt the University of Tennessee administration resented Extension funds going directly to Tennessee State and cited as evidence a recent proposal to begin charging Tennessee State overhead for items not charged for between 1970-1977. Dr. Farrell believes that if the States were required to match the Federal contribution to the 1890 schools, as they are for the 1862 schools, the Tennessee legislature would do so, thus expanding Tennessee State's Extension budget.

Recent developments between the two schools have apparently increased the tension in an already strained relationship. When I asked Dr. Farrell what was unique about Tennessee State that justified putting Extension funds there, he was surprisingly defensive, reminding me that their program was new and should not be compared to the 50 year old University of Tennessee program although I had not made any comparison. He also pointed out that University of Tennessee Extension has failed to serve low-income people, both black and white. Tennessee State, as he put it, "had to take what was left."

I asked Dr. Farrell if Tennessee State had its own advisory committees. He said no, it uses the 1862 advisory committees. When I suggested that these committees might not adequately represent the clientele Tennessee State served, he explained that the program of work, for both the 1890 and 1862 schools, was developed by specialists as they perceived the needs and there wasn't much input from the advisory groups anyway. I suspect that is true in many places but Dr. Farrell, having no vested interest in preserving the image of an effective citizen advisory structure, could afford to be candid about it.

The interview left me with three strong impressions. First, the relationship between the State's two land-grant colleges is far from harmonious. Second, Dr. Farrell considers Tennessee State particularly equipped to work with low-income minorities but is also sensitive to having that work regarded with condescension or his institution viewed as inferior. Third, a great deal of energy, at least on the administrative level, seems to be spent on institutional turf battles.

Tennessee State county professionals are identified as Community Resource Development agents (CRD). Their primary work involves the training and supervision of paraprofessionals who work primarily with low-income individuals. CRD agents themselves work directly with what are referred to as limited-resource communities. Some of the work that comes under the label of CRD is fairly traditional Extension education--sewing classes, newsletters, making Christmas decorations, organizing clubs (i.e.: senior citizen, community service) for limited resource clients. In effect, extending Extension to the poor. Some of the work is similar to the EFNEP--informing clients about public services and helping them deal with the red tape of government agencies. Some of the work is similar to community development projects I saw in other States, except that the clientele is exclusively low-income and the goals revolve around securing very basic services such as garbage pickups, improving the quality of drinking water, and installation of sanitary sewage systems.

The clients I spoke with were poor, white and black, and many were elderly. They were grateful for the assistance provided by the paraprofessionals and surprised that someone from Washington was interested in their opinions of the program. These people are used to being ignored. National prosperity has clearly passed them by. Moreover, their past experiences with institutions and government agenices have often caused them additional problems. So it is to the program's credit and the paraprofessionals' credit that a bond of acceptance has been established.

When I asked the staff what they thought were the important ways the Extension program differed from other government services for low-income people, they mentioned two things. Extension actively seeks out clients. Extension does not visit people to "spy" on them or make judgments about them. It is interesting that this same response was made by many EFNEP workers.

Most of the clients I talked to were served either by the traditional type Extension programs or home visits. A few were involved in community development efforts. Helping people to organize for a greater voice in their community or for self-help projects is a difficult undertaking. When the additional fact that the targeted clientele is poor (thus lacking in political clout as well as being economically vulnerable) is considered, the task becomes even more difficult. I was shown examples of successes--a new community center, a community now receiving water. I had no way of knowing how much credit Extension could legitimately claim for these. I was told of a few projects just beginning--a community fighting for garbage pickup, another trying to get county sewage hookups.

One agent was willing to talk about failures. A cooperative grocery store was started, but never became really successful, and finally closed. While discussing this failure, we were in the home of a family that had shopped in the store. I asked the woman why she thought it didn't work out. She said it was too far to travel (the county is very rural) and some folks objected to or did not understand why there was a membership fee. The agent interjected that local landowners and business people who disapproved of the store had applied not so subtle pressures. I watched her face. It closed over and she looked away, her withdrawal both confirming his observation and indicating it was not a subject for discussion especially with an outsider. Later the agent and I talked about the difficulty of improving life in a community for the poor. He said with a sigh that change took a long time. But he added with a smile "I'm going to be here a long time."

ALABAMA

My second visit was to Alabama, which I chose because it is in the unique position of having two black colleges receiving Federal Extension funds--Alabama A&M and Tuskegee Institute.

Alabama A&M is the State's 1890 land-grant college. It operates programs in 12 counties in the northern part of Alabama.* Like Tennessee State, the degree of cooperation between A&M and the white land-grant college (Auburn University) differs from county to county. Unlike Tennessee State, Alabama A&M has professional staff in 4-H and Home Economics as well as Community Resource Development, although agents do have responsibility for a program in more than one county. Alabama A&M Extension serves an area that has a large low-income population and a 15 percent black population. Alabama A&M's objective is to provide assistance to low-income people, regardless of race. Approximately 60 percent of Alabama A&M's clients are white.

Dr. Dawson, Director for Extension at Alabama A&M, estimates that probably nine out of every ten faculty members at the college come from low-income families and thus have a direct familiarity with the problems of low-income people. I asked a district supervisor if low-income whites were willing to accept assistance from a black institution and black professionals. His answer was candid: not always and not easily but "once we can show people we have something worthwhile to offer, their attitude begins to change." He further explained that the real obstacle was getting low-income people to believe they can be "part of the system," i.e. serve on advisory committees or attend meetings. For black clients, the problem is further compounded if Extension offices are located (which they often were and in some cases still are) in county courthouses, symbols of past oppression.

Although most Auburn Extension programs are not aimed at low-income clients and program planning is done jointly by the three colleges, Alabama A&M takes the added precaution of having clients sign a statement that they are not already clients of Auburn. It is a precaution against charges of duplication and/or client stealing.

Alabama A&M does not officially run an agriculture or small farm program but they do work with low-income part-time farmers for the simple reason that many people in rural Alabama farm, there just aren't many who can make a living at it. One farmer I interviewed had 50 acres under cultivation and raised some hogs and beef cattle. He said that more and more of the small farmers he knew were renting out their land because they couldn't afford to farm it. He thought the government should initiate programs specifically targeted at helping small producers to keep large producers from winding up with most of the benefits. He made two suggestions: lower interest rates for small producers and calculate the cost of production for small farms based on their actual costs. When I asked if he thought Extension's educational programs were useful to small farmers, he gave the stock answer that, yes, Extension keeps people informed of the latest farming methods and is a source of unbiased information. Then he laughed and added that all the help he really needed was in an area the government can't do much about--improving the price he receives for his products.

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*Alabama has a total of 67 counties.

I asked Dr. Dawson what he thought of Dr. Farrell's suggestion that States and counties be required to match 1890 Federal Extension monies. He thought that the Alabama legislature and county governments where A&M works would probably agree to match the Federal contributions but, of course, there was always the danger they would refuse, thus putting the entire program in jeopardy.

We discussed Alabama A&M's relations with Auburn. He explained that the relationship had improved substantially under the leadership of Dr. Sprott, the Alabama Extension Director. He also felt that it was essential for the 1890 land-grant colleges to have institutional independence, their own lines of staff supervision, and Federal funds that went directly to them. He said "there was a time from 1971 to 1977, when the 1890 Extension Directors could not hold a meeting without the permission of the 1862 southern Extension Directors. They would insist that our meeting be held at the same time and place as theirs. Even out-of-State travel by 1890 directors had to have the approval of the 1862 Extension Directors."

A five-hour drive south of Alabama A&M is Tuskegee Institute. I arrived on the day they were holding their 87th Annual Farmers Conference. Tuskegee, a private black college, has been working with low-income farmers since the days of Booker T. Washington and officially started an Extension outreach program in 1906.

With the advent of Federal Extension funding in the early 1970's, Tuskegee can now afford to have Extension staff working in the twelve counties referred to as the black belt counties of Alabama. Tuskegee employs professional staff in agriculture, home economics, 4-H, and community resource development, with all the county agents having responsibility for two counties each. Tuskegee targets its Extension program at hard-to-reach and unreached limited-resource families, which means that they are not necessarily poor or minority, though that is usually the case.

Mr. Brown, the Extension Director at Tuskegee, explained that the college tries to link up with government agencies such as FmHA and puts a lot of effort into raising soft money (non-permanent) in order to expand their effectiveness beyond the limits of their own budget.

I asked Mr. Brown if it would help his budget to have a State and local matching requirement for the Federal Extension funds he receives. He warned that one had to be very cautious about such a requirement. It would mean greater State control and there is even the possibility that Alabama might refuse the Federal funds, thus depriving Alabama A&M and Tuskegee of close to $1 million in Extension funds.

I asked Mr. Brown if there was an image problem with the work Tuskegee does. He said yes there are always people who assume that any Extension work with low-income clients is inherently a social service rather than education or research. Despite that, he said, "anything good Tuskegee comes up with Auburn takes and runs with." He explained that some of the staff get upset but the way he figures it the more Tuskegee makes Auburn use part of its $12 million Extension budget for such projects, the more Tuskegee can use its limited funds for other projects.

My first interview was with three agricultural program aides, who were also farmers. Among other things I asked them what suggestions they had for improving the assistance program for low-income, small farmers. Their suggestions ranged from developing small-scale, cheaper machinery, to special educational efforts to let small-farmers know about Extension and ASCS programs, to directly providing materials such as lumber for self-help building projects, to organizing Rural Improvement Associations of local small-scale producers who could jointly purchase supplies and provide a credit union for its members. None of the aides thought that changing production into higher profit margin crops or improving the production mix were sufficient in themselves to alleviate the more critical problems facing limited-resource farmers.

My field visits at Tuskegee gave me my first interview with a woman farmer. She is a swine and goat producer who is part of an experimental project introducing a new breed of goat to Alabama. The new breed is larger than the native goats and has a better feed-weight gain ratio. Her willingness to be part of this project allows Tuskegee to use her farm as a demonstration for neighbors, who, if they raise goats at all, raise the smaller native ones.

I was curious about why she was willing to participate in the program. As far as I could tell from our conversation her reasons were similar to those of any early innovator. She was a risk-taker, intelligent, and intrigued by the opportunity to experiment with a new breed (she also raised the native goats). Despite her poverty, she was optimistic and energetic. Such people aren't rare but they aren't the norm either.

I asked the district supervisor I was traveling with what he thought was the biggest obstacle in working with low income people. He said "getting started." He explained that poor people have been so abused by the system that it is difficult to win their trust. You have to help them in ways that have immediate results so they can see for themselves some tangible rewards. He also pointed out that it is easy to work with the more successful black farmers. There have always been some of those and Auburn and Tuskegee have both served this clientele. The real challenge, he said, is working with limited-resource farmers of both races.

TEXAS

My last visit was to Prairie View A&M in Texas. Prairie View has Extension programs in 25 counties aimed at reaching limited-resource families in the areas of agriculture, home economics, and home gardening. The programs at Prairie View rely heavily on paraprofessionals, employing 12 program specialists and 75 program aides who work directly with clients on a one-to-one basis. The specialists provide program training, backup expertise, and will eventually be responsible for preparing the materials used in the various programs.

Local on-site supervision of the program aides is done by the county-based staff from Texas A&M. The arrangement is informal but critical to the program's operation. In fact, a prime criteria for selecting counties to work in, is the willingness of the Texas A&M county staff to have the program.

This approach is obviously very different than Alabama and Tennessee. That may be because the working relationship between Prairie View A&M and Texas A&M seems to be quite good--even friendly. Whatever the reason, the extensive use of paraprofessionals allows Prairie View to run a larger program than if it was staffed primarily by professionals. The only time I detected some strain was when I asked why Prairie View had not been given a share of the EFNEP program since it had lots of experience with low-income clients and the use of paraprofessionals. The response from both the President of the College and Mr. Cardin, the Extension Director for Prairie View, was "ask the people at Texas A&M."

Almost all Prairie View's Extension work is in east Texas where the minority population is black, but in Texas there is another large minority group, Mexican-Americans. Prairie View has a small farm program in one county in the Rio Grande Valley where the population is primarily Mexican-American. In that county, Prairie View has hired Spanish-speaking aides.

Mr. Cardin was not in favor of requiring State and local matching funds. He felt that Prairie View was in no position to compete with larger institutions like the University of Texas and Texas Tech for State funds.

Both Texas A&M and Prairie View A&M are located in east Texas about 45 miles apart. It is a geographically beautiful but poor area of the State, populated with decaying small towns. The Texas A&M campus is the epitome of an academic/industrial complex--a labyrinth of new high-rise buildings and parking lots. Prairie View is a very small campus with few new buildings and some 1940 wooden barracks being used to office staff, including Extension. The contrast is startling.

CONCLUSION

The program content of the work being done by 1890 colleges struck me as fairly traditional Extension education and services. What did impress me was their dedication to working with low-income, limited-resource clients. Since the 1890 colleges did not get Extension funding until 1971, they do not have long-established client groups, so they are in the process of searching out clients and patiently working to win their acceptance. It is not an easy undertaking but the black land-grant colleges have nonetheless chosen to put their institutional resources at the service of some of the most needy members of our society.